Making it Personal

Educators are the heart of a new movement to prevent dropouts. Page 24

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HIGH STAKES

The making of the tests that can make or break schools. SEE PAGE 29

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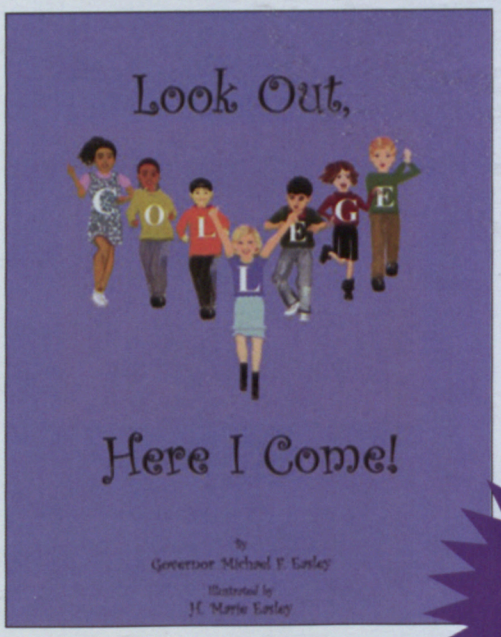

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Reg Weaver, NEA President

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features

COVER 29

HIGH STAKES

How do standards become test scores? What do "proficient" and "grade level" really mean? And how are high-stakes tests dumbing down education? You won't see these questions on any test, but the answers might surprise you.

DROPOUT PREVENTION

Making it Personal 24

As the movement to keep kids in school takes on new urgency, *NEA Today* asked educators across the country to share how they've made a difference in the life of a would-be dropout.

MILITARY RECRUITING

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As educators and community members join forces to limit military recruiting in schools, the armed forces redouble their efforts to win the hearts and minds of educators.

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Holocaust survivor Henri Landwirth takes his message of forgiveness to schools across the country.

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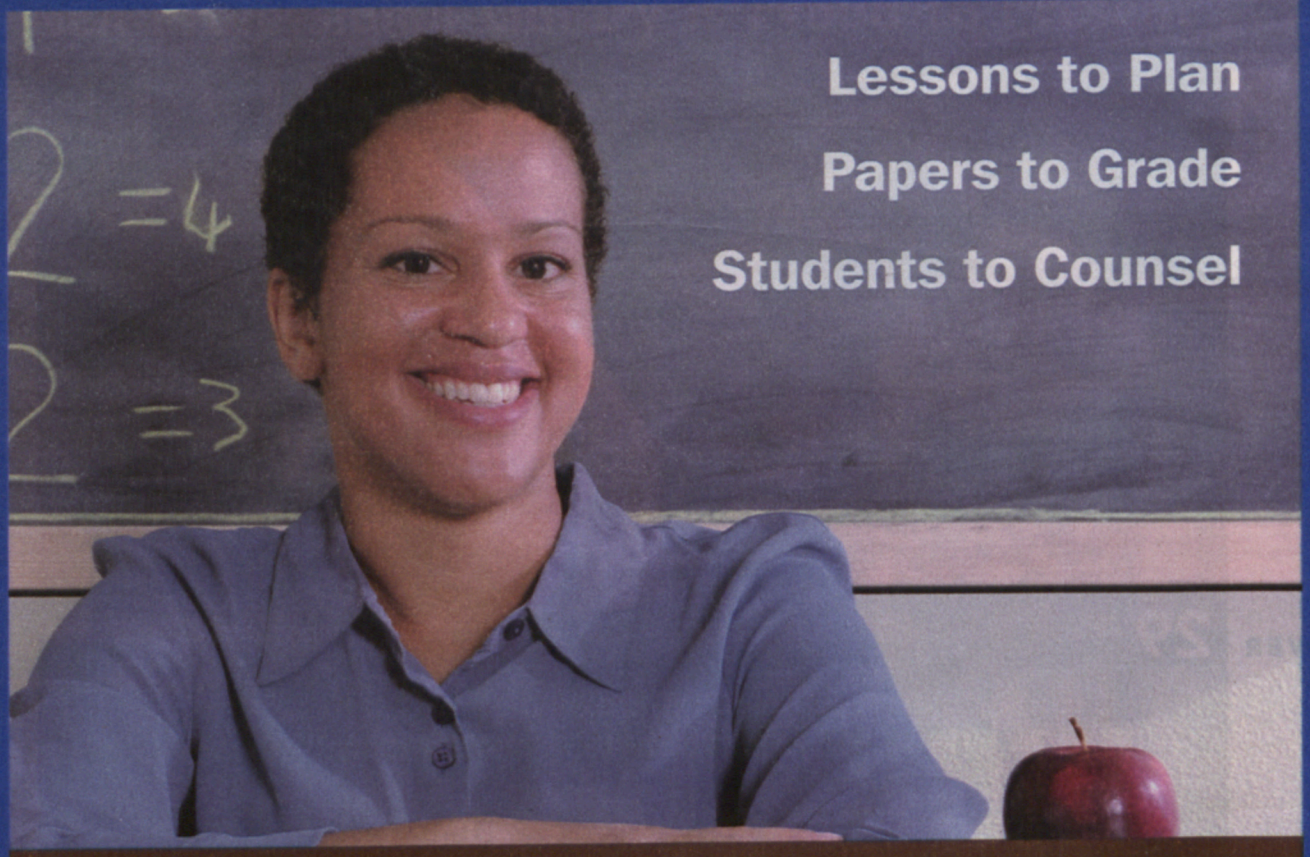

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Great Public Schools for Every Child

APRIL

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Get It in Writing 22

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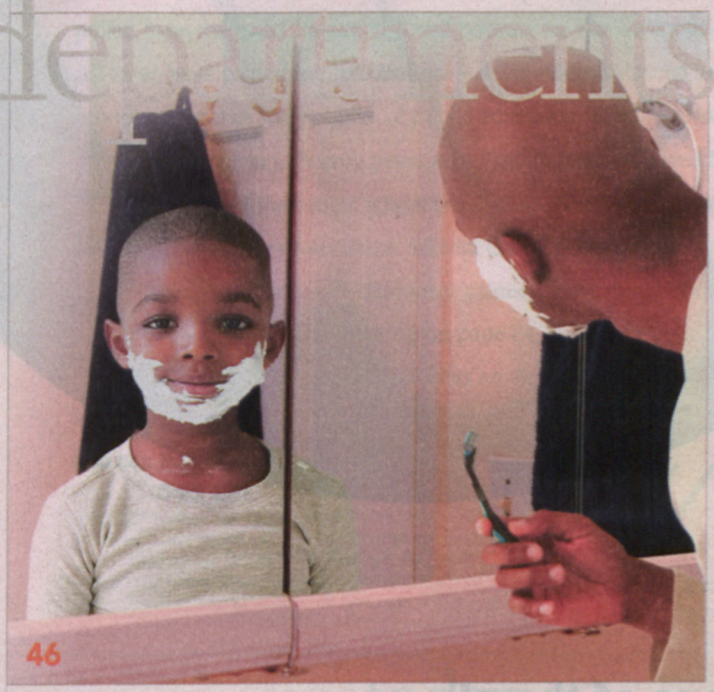

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Substitute teacher or traveling adventurer? A little bit of both, writes one veteran of changing classrooms.

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ON THE WEB

NEA'S DROPOUT INITIATIVE www.nea.org/ref?3443
Head here for NEA's action plan, tips for parents, and stories from people like you who are helping students stay in school.

MYSPACE www.nea.org/ref?3444
Hear from teens about why some students misuse MySpace. Plus, find out if you have an "imposter" MySpace profile.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Stories Behind the Stats

The numbers are staggering: 1 million students fail to graduate each year. But behind that statistic are real kids with real stories. Like Jenny, who left school when she became pregnant. Or Miguel, who lost everything in an apartment fire and went to work full-time to support his mother. Or Ian, who was nearly pulled from the band classes he loved because he was struggling in other subjects. All three have something in common—caring educators who helped them stay in school. It's part of the promise of public education, and the rewards for educators are equally inspiring. Twenty years ago, Sheri Green promised her kindergarten class she'd attend their high school graduation. She kept that promise a dozen years later, and every year since. Movita Utt helped a student struggling with family issues graduate, and ultimately gained a new member of her own family. You can read their stories starting on page 24, and share your own at www.nea.org/ref?3443. NEA is backing an ambitious $10 billion program to keep kids in school, and dedicated educators are the heart and soul of that effort. You can be, too.

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These principles guide our work and define our mission:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.

A JUST SOCIETY. We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

DEMOCRACY. We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

PROFESSIONALISM. We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due all professionals.

PARTNERSHIP. We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.

COLLECTIVE ACTION. We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

Disappearing Capital

The high cost of high school dropouts

I grew up in the Midwest, where many people used to work in factories. Today, many of those manufacturing jobs are gone. And the new jobs that have replaced them require new skills that we never even thought about when I was in school.

We have entered a new era—the knowledge economy—in which education will be more important than ever. Today, a high school diploma is absolutely essential for anyone who wants an opportunity to succeed. For the most part, our schools are serving the needs of students who go on to college. But we are failing the ones who never make it to the finish line.

When our nation was attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, every American recognized the attacks as a threat to our way of life. But our democracy is also threatened by the rate at which young people are dropping out of school before they earn their diplomas.

Some experts report that nearly one-third of all public school students fail to graduate with their class. And among Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students, there is roughly a 50-50 chance of graduating from high school. The odds are equally poor for some Asian-American groups, especially Southeast Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

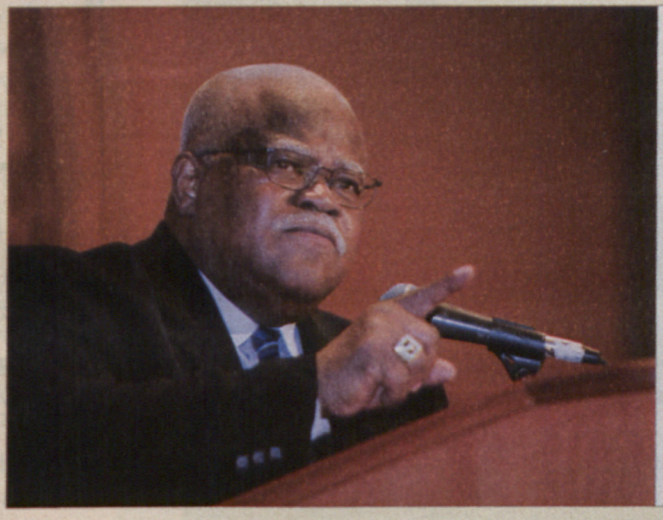
These youngsters are not just falling through the cracks—they are falling into a crater that threatens to swallow our nation's future. The students who drop out of school will pay a heavy financial price for the rest of their lives. But our whole society will also pay a price.

We will pay a price in lost tax revenue, because these young people will be unable to earn a decent living. We will pay the cost of incarcerating those who turn to crime because they cannot find a good-paying job. And our society will pay an awful price for squandering the human potential of millions of young people.

A recent study by the Alliance for Excellent Education showed that our economy would grow by more than $325 billion if every student graduated from high school. A team of economists from Columbia University also found that each new high school graduate would contribute an additional $139,100 in income tax revenue; would save $40,500 in public health care costs; and would reduce crime-related costs by $26,600 over a lifetime.

Team NEA, we should not only be concerned. We should be outraged. It's time for us to get serious about addressing the dropout crisis in our country.

Our 12-point action plan to reduce the dropout rate has drawn acclaim from congressional leaders and progressive organizations since its launch in October. The comprehensive initiative is also receiving strong support from allies representing minority communities—groups such as ASPIRA, NAACP, the National Association for Asian and Pacific American Education, and the National Indian Education Association that are dedicated to working with us to tackle the alarming dropout rate.



Our 12-point action plan to reduce the dropout rate has drawn acclaim from congressional leaders and progressive organizations since its launch in October.

—REG WEAVER

The NEA plan calls for more emphasis on vocational and technical training—and for integrating those programs into traditional schools. If a student has decided not to pursue a college degree, we need to keep him or her engaged in school by offering skills that will be relevant.

Like the economy, public schools must adapt to help all students graduate and become productive citizens. As caring and committed educators, I know we can help make this mission a reality.

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

PHOTO: JOHN DZIEKAN/NEA

Virtual But Not Reality

The ideas in the story "Going Virtual" (March) were very helpful. I have done some virtual museum tours with my art history students using a Smart Board, and it has been terrific. Also, the story gave me the idea of using Google Maps and Google Earth on a Smart Board or projected on a plasma TV. This would be very cool! But—and it's a big but—nothing substitutes for a real field trip. We as educators have to make sure our kids get authentic experiences that are not compromised because of claims of "no money."

JANET MANDEL
Maplewood, New Jersey

Podcasting Gap?

As a teacher doing some serious podcasting with my students ("Podcasting the 1600s," March), I can attest to the excitement generated by "having an audience." I noticed that the article described Jamestown Elementary as an affluent school outside of Washington, D.C. Does that affluence translate into professional flexibility that may or may not be available in high-needs schools? And if so, does this add to the academic divide that already exists between students of wealth and students of poverty?

BILL FERRITER
Cary, North Carolina

COMICS ARE LITERATURE

I was pleased to see references to comic books in the March issue ("Comic Relief"). As a first-grade teacher who grew up reading comics, I think they are an excellent way to get students interested in reading. Comic books contain story elements and structure just like children's literature, use pictures as well as words to convey story, and most importantly, engage children to read! Thank you for showing that comic books can be used to develop a student's love for reading.

JEFF SULLIVAN
Westbrook, Connecticut

WIPE YOUR TEARS

I believe that David Keyes' attitude toward annual standardized tests ("Crying Over a Test," March) is hurtful to students, their parents, and public education. Should elementary school years be a cocoon against all manner of normal but less than serene responses to life's many future challenges? I think not. It should be a period of convincing them that we all make mistakes, feel nervous at times, but live to become increasingly stronger through these experiences. But "crying over a test" need never happen if children are properly prepared emotionally as well as academically.

BEV GIBBONS
Apache Junction, Arizona

THANKING THE ACADEMY

I would like to applaud the "hands-on, real world" applications that Hamilton County teachers in Chattanooga are infusing into their teachings ("Academy Rewards," March). I have been teaching industrial arts and

CYBER-COMMENTARY

UNIVERSAL CONSIDERATION

Teaching good manners should be done by example. Taking into account cultural differences, we should understand that in some cultures, it is disrespectful to look someone directly in the eye. To force a child to do so is akin to asking a child or an adult of American culture descent to burp at the dinner table (to show good manners). It would be awkward, uncomfortable, and goes against the grain of what has been taught in that person's home. There is a common denominator that crosses all societies and cultures, and that is being considerate and using appropriate words around others.

NO MORE SWEETS

With childhood obesity on the rise, along with other weight-related health issues, such as type II diabetes and heart disease, educators most definitely need to serve their students healthy food. We need to be leaders and examples of healthful living and eating. Fruit, unbuttered popcorn, and low sodium crackers are good alternatives to sugar, candy, and soda.

—From the nea.org discussion boards

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applied technology for 30 years and have always felt that when you show students relevance about what they are learning, they will begin to take ownership in classroom activities and, of course, their education.

WAYNE MCGARVA
Stanhope, New Jersey

"Academy Rewards" nicely salutes the hard work and determination demonstrated by the Hamilton County School System leaders, faculties, and support staffs. As a graduate and a former teacher from Hamilton County, it is encouraging to read about the outcomes and progress Chattanooga is making.

TAMMI SHAFFER
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

GENDER NEUTRALITY

In "Where the Girls Are Not" (UpFront, March), you ask the reader to "[c]onsider Afghanistan," quoting abysmal statistics from an Oxfam report to illustrate how few girls attend school and how few women pursue teaching, glossing over the good news that school enrollment has increased 500 percent in the past six years. That 500 percent increase is the result of U.S. troops removing the Taliban. If the NEA truly took gender equality seriously, it would stop looking to the toothless U.N. to solve the problem.

DEBORAH YOUNG
Diamond Bar, California

END OF THE LINE

I grew up in and around Flint, Michigan. The plight of schools there breaks my heart ("The End of the Line," February), as I have family and friends supported by the car industry. GM abandoned the town and left it in ruins. In middle school, I told other students I would go to college and leave because GM would not be around to provide me with a job. They called me a traitor. Who is the traitor now?

MOLLY HENDERSON
Anne Arundel County, Maryland

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What are you looking forward to?

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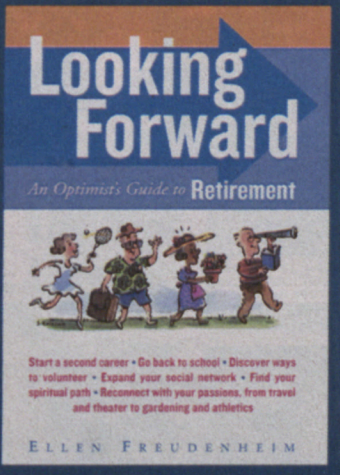
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upfront

Trends
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With Strings Attached?

Big-money benefactors are stepping up donations to education, but their largesse often comes with an agenda.

IN RECENT YEARS, philanthropic donations to education have gotten much bigger than the local restaurant's Field Day sponsorship. In 2000, one of every seven dollars given to charity went to an educational institute, including nearly $25 billion in grants from private foundations, says the conservative Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Those foundations and institutes are often led by business leaders hoping to reshape education reform by directing their dollars to their own preferred projects. Those range from small schools to charter schools to new routes for nontraditional teachers and administrators, says Frederick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute, author of *With the Best of Intentions: How Philanthropy Is Reshaping the Landscape of K–12 Education.*

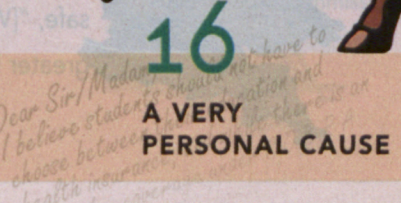
In return, donors often demand private sector-style accountability, including, at times, links between money and test scores. They often manage to steer education policy, using their money and their celebrity, without public input. For example, in 2004, the Walton Family Foundation contributed more than $6 million to efforts in New York to improve charter schools. It spent more than $17 million on voucher efforts or private school scholarships.

So are all of these gift horses to be turned away? Not so fast. This year, NEA leaders have been talking with the Gates Foundation and other foundations about how we can work together and how they can work with state affiliates. "This is a brand-new venture for us...with incredible possibilities," said NEA's Rufina Hernández.

And, of course, there's always our favorite philanthropic organization to consider: The NEA Foundation. This year, it awarded $250,000 to Seattle Public Schools to help close achievement gaps, and it also provides individual grants to public school employees. For more information, go to www.nea.org/ref?3448.

13
A METH USER NEAR YOU?

15
FAIR PAY IN VA



16
A VERY PERSONAL CAUSE

HORSE ILLUSTRATION: VALLENTIN VASSILEFF; BOW PHOTO: MARTIN GARNHAM

Getting Help with the Bills

Anthony Daniels, the NEA Student Program chair, owes more money in student loans than he can expect to earn annually as an Alabama teacher. And he's not alone. Many new teachers wonder how they can pay for food and rent—plus make good on their loans—on a first-year teaching salary.

THAT'S WHY Daniels and other NEA Student members appeared before the 2007 Congress to ask for cuts in interest rates on federally subsidized student loans. And that's why they celebrated in January when the House passed The College Student Relief Act, which cut rates in half.

"Like most students, I chose a career in teaching because it is the most rewarding profession in the world....Unfortunately, the joy that comes from teaching doesn't pay the bills," Daniels said at a January press conference for the Campaign for College Affordability National Day of Action.

To get involved, go to www.nea.org/ref?3449, where you can sign up for text messages about the affordability campaign or join NEA's Facebook group called, "College Affordability Concerns Me."

A HEALTHY NETWORK

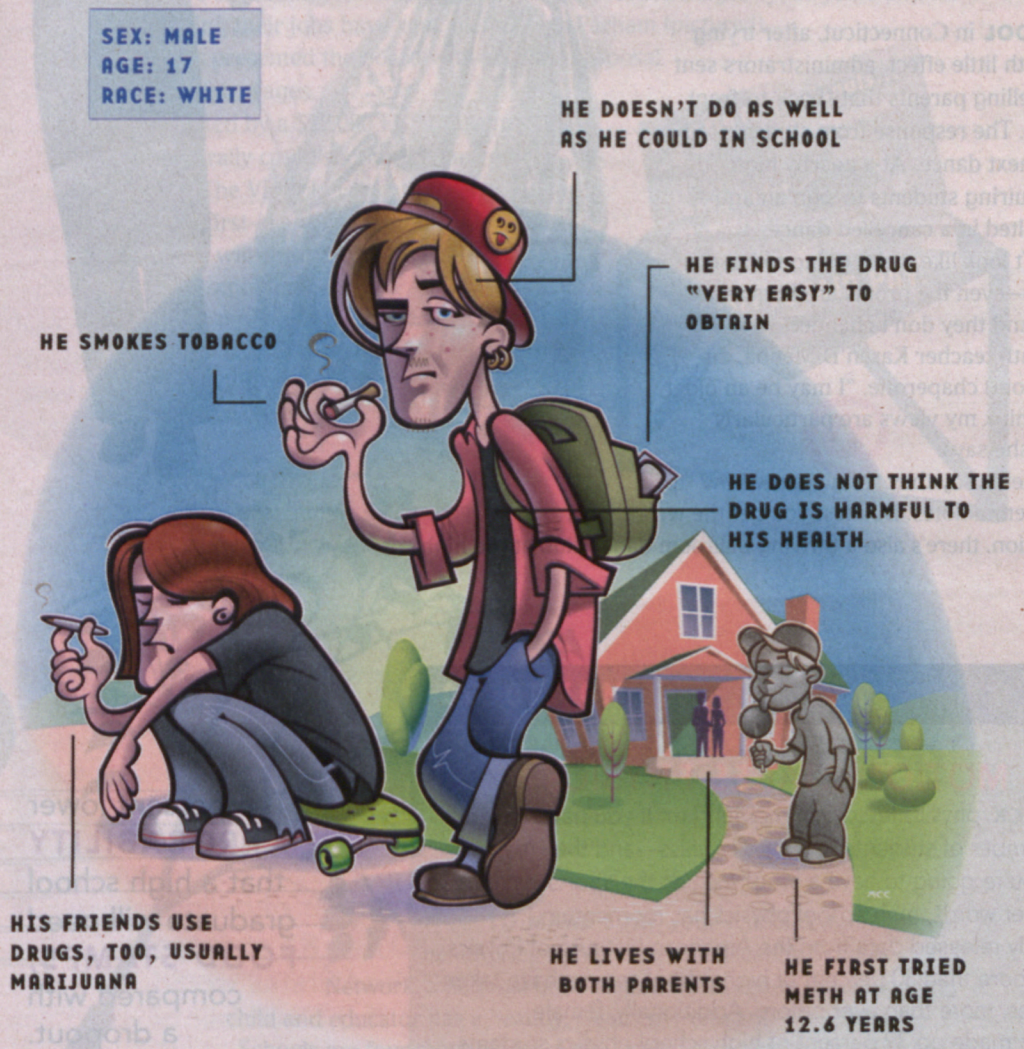
CROSSED WIRES

SCHOOLS, AIRPORTS, and even coffeehouses often boast of their wireless Internet connections. But across the Atlantic, several schools in England have pulled the plug on wireless networks in response to health fears. Though they lack conclusive research, parents said they worry low-level radiation from transmitters causes headaches, memory loss, even cancer. One teacher told *The (London) Times* that although local government said it's perfectly safe, "[We] decided that the concerns of the parents were of greater importance than our need to have a wireless network."

PHOTO: SANDY SCHAEFFER; ENGLAND ILLUSTRATION: RONFROMYORK; RADIO TOWER ILLUSTRATION: CINDY HUGHES

Picturing the Typical School-Age Meth User

ABOUT 3 PERCENT of 6th- through 12th-graders reported using methamphetamines during the past year, according to a Pride Survey of more than 100,000 students. Meth, a highly addictive stimulant, can be made using household products, and authorities have discovered increasing numbers of small labs across the United States. Here's what the Pride Survey says about the typical user:


SEX: MALE
AGE: 17
RACE: WHITE
HE DOESN'T DO AS WELL AS HE COULD IN SCHOOL
HE FINDS THE DRUG "VERY EASY" TO OBTAIN
HE SMOKES TOBACCO
HE DOES NOT THINK THE DRUG IS HARMFUL TO HIS HEALTH
HIS FRIENDS USE DRUGS, TOO, USUALLY MARIJUANA
HE LIVES WITH BOTH PARENTS
HE FIRST TRIED METH AT AGE 12.6 YEARS

SOURCE: PRIDE SURVEYS, 2007.

9,100

Average **TAXES** paid over a lifetime by a high school **GRADUATE.**

SOURCE: TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ILLUSTRATION: MARK COLLINS

Notepad

More Hoops for You?

Did you manage to convince Uncle Sam you're "highly qualified" under No Child Left Behind (NCLB)? Some people think that was too easy.

A commission organized by the Aspen Institute has issued a raft of recommendations for changing NCLB. A key proposal: More hoops for educators to jump through. Students would have to show testing gains big enough to put their teachers in the top 75 percent of those statewide. So, if you try to help students who have big problems and little other support, and they don't learn as fast as more fortunate students, it's your fault. Parents are notified and you could be driven out of the profession.

Among the commission's other proposals: More tests and more ways for schools to fail, including a new 12th-grade assessment. The conservative Fordham Foundation calls the recommendations "a disaster." "NCLB on steroids," says the public interest group Fairtest.

NEA President Reg Weaver wants members to urge their representatives to oppose these commission recommendations. You can send a message at www.nea.org/ref?3452.

NEA has proposed its own positive agenda for changing NCLB and reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: www.nea.org/ref?3453. See the full Aspen proposal at www.nclbcommission.org.

Freak Out!

It's dancing that goes beyond dirty. And, after years of gritted teeth, teachers say their dance card is full when it comes to "freaking"—a dance style that some say looks like sex with clothes on.

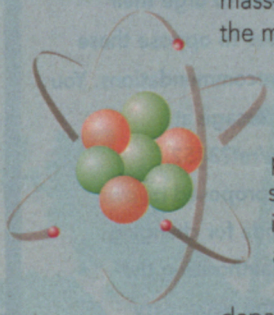
AT SIMSBURY HIGH SCHOOL in Connecticut, after trying different kinds of music with little effect, administrators sent a letter home in January, telling parents that "back-to-front dancing" was now banned. The response from students? Six kids bought tickets to the next dance. At a nearby high school, a similar effort requiring students to sign an anti-freaking contract also resulted in a cancelled dance.

"At this point, it doesn't look like we're going to have any more dances this year—even the proms are in question. Put them in a fancy dress and they don't change!" says veteran Simsbury High math teacher Karen DiMenna, an experienced (and grossed-out) chaperone. "I may be an older staff member, but I don't think my views are particularly outdated—it's just nasty," she says.

For their part, the students say they "don't know how" to dance any other way, DiMenna notes. But, lest you get the wrong idea about the younger generation, there's also a thriving ballroom dance club at the high school.

MO' TO GO

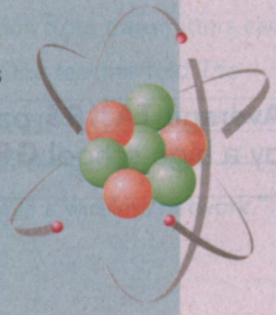
A BODY IN MOTION...TAKES PHYSICS



HERE'S A QUICK physics lesson on momentum: If you have a large mass—say, the number of students in a physics class—and they're on the move, then you're going to have a lot of mo', as the sportscasters say. In other words, high school physics has momentum.

Recently released data from the American Institute of Physics (AIP) show more than 30 percent of high school seniors have taken physics classes, more than ever before. Additionally, female students, who made up 39 percent of high school physics students in 1987, now represent 47 percent, while the percentages of Black and Hispanic students have more than doubled.

Steven Henning, chair of the physics/chemistry department at Clarkstown High School in New York has seen that growth. And, while AIP points to more AP classes and more "conceptual" physics classes as reasons for the bigger numbers, Henning also points to better teaching—more inquiry-based instruction, and greater attention to how kids learn. And, increasingly, competitive colleges "are looking for kids willing to take challenging courses," he says, "not kids who slack off in the final year."



11

The percent lower **PROBABILITY** that a high school graduate will need **FOOD STAMPS,** compared with a dropout.

SOURCE: TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

BALLROOM DANCERS: VASILIY KOVAL.
ATOM ILLUSTRATION: JOSE ELIAS DE SILVA NETO.

In Virginia, Fighting for a Living Wage

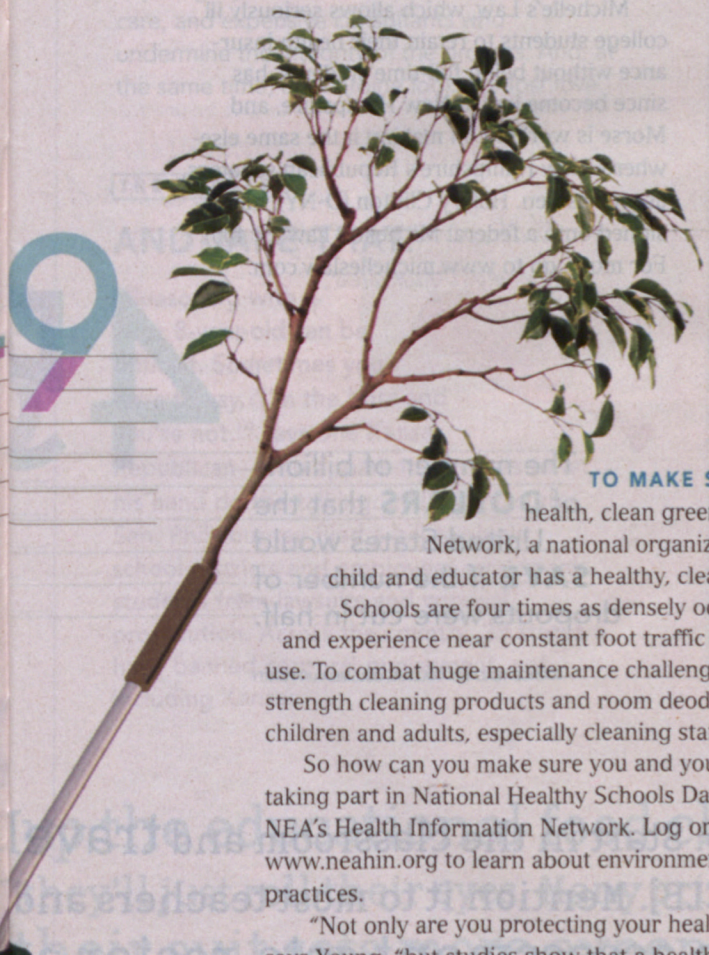
When about 75 members of Virginia's Sussex Education Association joined parents, elected officials, and community leaders at a recent living wage rally outside a building where the county school board was meeting, a floodlight brought in for the rally fizzled out. So **bus driver Jerry Parham** grabbed a flashlight to ensure the poverty-level wages of his fellow education support professionals (ESPs) would still be brought to light.

"We're advocating for employees who have worked diligently for years and for fear of losing their jobs have kept silent," says Parham (pictured).

Ralliers presented the board with a salary proposal calling for fair wages.

Supported by a $12,000 ESP grant from NEA, the Sussex rally could soon be replicated statewide. The Virginia Education Association is holding its first-ever living wage conference in May, which will help ESPs plan campaigns in their own communities.

To learn more about living wage campaigns, visit www.nea.org/ref?3447, where you can send an e-card featuring Parham and his story to friends and colleagues.



It's Not Hard Bein' Green!

TO MAKE SURE your school is in the pink of health, clean green, says the Healthy Schools Network, a national organization dedicated to ensuring every child and educator has a healthy, clean environment.

Schools are four times as densely occupied as commercial office spaces, and experience near constant foot traffic and more than full-time building use. To combat huge maintenance challenges, many schools use industrial-strength cleaning products and room deodorizers that can be hazardous to children and adults, especially cleaning staff.

So how can you make sure you and your students are safe? Start by taking part in National Healthy Schools Day on April 30, says Jennie Young of NEA's Health Information Network. Log onto www.healthyschools.org or www.neahin.org to learn about environmentally safe cleaning products and practices.

"Not only are you protecting your health and the health of your students," says Young, "but studies show that a healthy indoor environment, free of harmful chemicals, has a direct impact on student and staff performance."

Capitol Report

U.S. Congress Increases Education Funding

The pro-public education Congress educators helped elect last November took an important step in reversing the trend of education funding cuts. It passed a continuing resolution to fund programs for the rest of the fiscal year (through September 30) to the tune of $1 billion (a 2.7 percent increase). The money goes to much-needed increases for Pell Grants, Title I, special education, and School Improvement programs. Next, Congress will assemble a budget and set specific program funding levels for the next fiscal year. NEA continues to push for more increases to help fulfill every child's basic right to a great public school.

Support Grows for Social Security Offset Repeal

Legislation to repeal the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision continues garnering support. At press time, the House version of the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82) had jumped to more than 220 bipartisan cosponsors; the Senate version (S. 206) had 15 bipartisan supporters. That's a direct result of continued pressure from NEA members nationwide fighting for this long overdue repeal. Learn more at www.nea.org/ref?3554.

Have a great idea?

> Send it by mail:
NEA Today
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

> Send it by e-mail:
neatoday@nea.org

MOP AND BUCKET: DANIEL GOODINGS; TREE PHOTO: PHOTODISC GREEN

Mrs. Morse Goes to Washington

Annmarie Morse with her daughter, Michelle, and husband.

IF YOU WONDER whether one person can make a difference in her state or national Capitol, take a look at Annmarie Morse. She's a mom on a mission, as she brings "Michelle's Law," named for her late daughter, across the country.

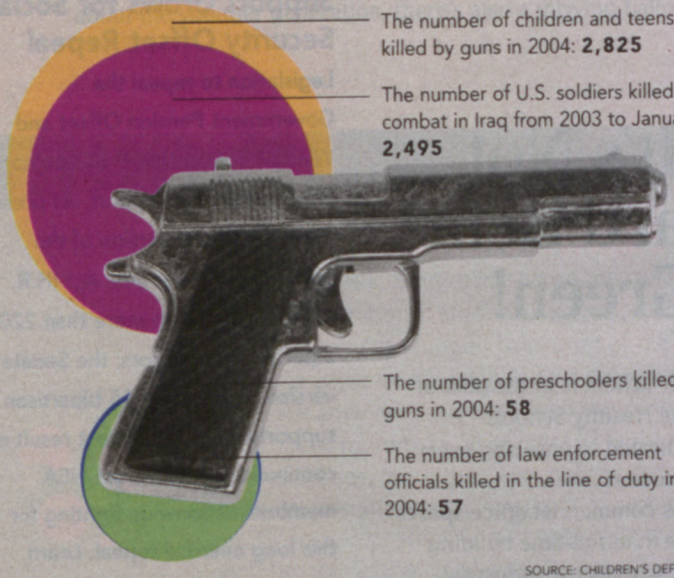
Morse, a high school business teacher in Manchester, New Hampshire, lost her 22-year-old daughter to colon cancer in 2005. Michelle, an elementary education student at Plymouth State College—"a natural teacher," her mother says—endured a rigorous campaign of chemotherapy and her doctors had recommended a leave of absence from school. But to maintain her insurance benefits, Michelle was forced to remain a full-time student. "I was furious," says Morse.

Even though she didn't know how to get involved in the legislative process, she started writing letters—to state representatives, her governor, journalists, anybody she could think of. "They were letters from the heart, and I think those are the letters people listen to."

Michelle's Law, which allows seriously ill college students to retain their health insurance without being full-time students, has since become law in New Hampshire, and Morse is working on making it the same elsewhere. New Hampshire's Republican senators, as well as Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY), have signed onto a federal Michelle's Law (S. 400). For more, go to www.michelleslaw.com.

VITAL STATS

Since 1979, 101,413 children have been killed by guns—more than the combined casualties of all American wars since World War II. The rate is especially high for Black children, particularly teenage Black boys, and it's also a growing hazard for girls.



The number of children and teens killed by guns in 2004: **2,825**

The number of U.S. soldiers killed in combat in Iraq from 2003 to January 2007: **2,495**

The number of preschoolers killed by guns in 2004: **58**

The number of law enforcement officials killed in the line of duty in 2004: **57**

SOURCE: CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

45

The number of billions of **DOLLARS** that the United States would **SAVE** if the number of dropouts were cut in half.

SOURCE: TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

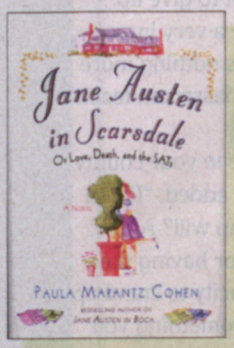
"Here's a pretty safe rule of thumb: Start in the classroom and travel more you'll find that people like [NCLB]. Mention it to most teachers and and the assessment gets rosier as

MORSE FAMILY PHOTO; GUN PHOTO: SCOTT ROTHSTEIN

BOOK FOCUS

You're In!

With college applications safely mailed off to leafy campuses around the country, and recommendation letters thankfully out of your hands, you can breathe a little. (Right, counselors?) And, we hope, now you can laugh a little at the process as detailed in *Jane Austen in Scarsdale: Or Love, Death and the SATs* (St. Martin's Press), a novel by Paula Marantz Cohen, the best-selling author of *Jane Austen in Boca*. In it, a fictitious guidance counselor in a high-pressure New York City suburb deals with anxious parents who scheme to get their kids into anything Ivy, slacker kids who simply don't care, and expensive consultants who undermine the integrity of the process. And, at the same time, our heroine looks for lost love.



THE PADDLE

AND TAKE THAT!

"Reasoning with a 7- or 8-year-old can be difficult. Sometimes you have to say, 'I'm the boss and you're not,'" says one Kansas Republican—who apparently prefers to let his hand do the talking. In January, state Sen. Phil Journey filed a bill to shield school districts and employees who spank students from lawsuits and criminal prosecution. Across the country, 29 states have banned corporal punishment, not including Kansas.

Q&A

QUESTIONS FOR **Jan Harp Domene**

Parent Leader

The president-elect of the national PTA knows about dropout prevention. She almost was one. Now she's working with NEA on its plan to help the nearly 7,000 students who drop out every day (see more on page 24).

What makes this such an important issue for you personally?
Domene: I could have been that kid! Although my parents loved me very much, education wasn't a priority for them. My mom was from another country, and my father was from rural Alabama. He left school after fifth grade. Their thinking about me was, "You're 16. You need to get a job and help support the family." If it wasn't for my yearbook teacher and a counselor who got together and said, "We need to figure out a way to keep her in school," I'd have left. They really took care of me.

How can parents and teachers work better to prevent kids from dropping out?
Domene: We need to put our efforts into early intervention and prevention, instead of coming back and dealing with rehabilitation down the way. Too often, we say, "Oh, he's only a first-grader! And he's missed just a few days of school!" But that's a pattern, and it leads to truancy. Kids who drop out are kids who have fallen so far behind that they don't see a way of catching up. And we also need to realize that kids aren't in school just for reading and arithmetic—they're drawn to school for arts, dance, athletics. If you start taking away the things that they love, you're going to lose those kids.

Sometimes teachers complain that some parents are completely absent from the learning process. Other times they fear the "helicopter" parent who hovers constantly. What do teachers need to understand about both kinds?
Domene: Both of those parents care for their kids, they just don't know how to deal with the situation. One is so overwhelmed that they're absent. The other is such a nurturer, they're smothering the kid. I think both are looking for help, and they're looking for teachers to give that help.

What do parents really want from teachers?
Domene: Teachers need to communicate with parents. I know it's hard for them. God knows it's hard! But they need to make parents feel valued, like their opinion is important. All parents want their kids to succeed, but they don't know how to do it. They look to teachers as the guiding force.

up the educational food chain. The further you travel, the they'll just roll their eyes. Many principals tolerate it... their suit gets more expensive."

—*USA TODAY*, JANUARY 8, 2007.

PADDLE PHOTO: IMAGE SOURCE; DOMENE PHOTO: NATIONAL PTA

Sending a Message

NEA Executive Committee members visit Arkansas to support striking educators—and make the case for professional pay.

When Leroy Williams, president of the Lee County Education Association, appeared before the Lee County school board in January, teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) in the poorest county in Arkansas had not been given a raise in three years. Williams was asking for a $1,000 pay raise for teachers and a $450 increase for ESPs. The board, not for the first time, rejected the pay hike proposal, 4–3.

After the Association's efforts to persuade the district to agree to professional mediation fell on deaf ears, enough was enough. On January 29, more than 100 teachers and support professionals hit the picket lines and went on strike.

NEA President **Reg Weaver** and members of the NEA Executive Committee brought encouragement and support to striking educators in Marianna, Arkansas.

One week later, NEA President Reg Weaver and Executive Committee members Carolyn Crowder, Becky Pringle, and Marsha Smith traveled to Marianna, Arkansas, to support the striking educators, all part of NEA's grassroots campaign to improve professional pay for the nation's teachers and ESPs. Arkansas Education Association President Daniel Marzoni joined Weaver, Crowder, Pringle, and Smith at a rally at Kingdom Connection Church on February 2.

"When we heard that meaningful communication had for some reason been cut off," Weaver told the enthusiastic crowd, "When we heard some of our family members were not being treated like the professionals they are, we had to be here. We are part of your family. You need to know that the 3.2 million members of the National Education Association are with you!"

Weaver urged Lee County's educators not to give up. Weaver and Marzoni also urged them to take a very important message back to the community: There is nothing more these professionals want to do but be in the classroom teaching their students.

"You are advocating for the young people in your county to have the best possible education," Weaver added. "If you don't stand up and speak up for you, then who will? And if you don't do it now, then when? Thank you for having the audacity to stand up for something you believe in."

The rally in Marianna ultimately helped persuade the district to agree to a mediator to settle the dispute and also raised $2,500 to pay for health insurance for the support staffers. For Leroy Williams, the visit by Weaver and members of the Executive Committee came at a critical time.

"We were pretty tired; some were depressed and beginning to lose hope," he said. "We all left the rally feeling rejuvenated."

After two weeks, the teachers decided to return to the classroom; in return, district officials agreed to work to increase teacher and ESP salaries and benefits for next year. The agreement to end the strike included no retaliation or retribution by either side. While the Lee educators were relieved to be back at work and looking forward to helping students prepare for the state benchmark tests, the commitment to better pay has not waned, and the issue will be raised again by Lee County teachers and ESPs next year, Williams said.

"We succeeded in getting people together and sending our message across the county, state, and the entire nation," he said. "Our voice was undoubtedly heard."

—TIM WALKER

> **"WE SUCCEEDED IN getting people together and sending our message across the county, state, and the entire nation. Our voice was undoubtedly heard."** — LEROY WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT OF THE LEE COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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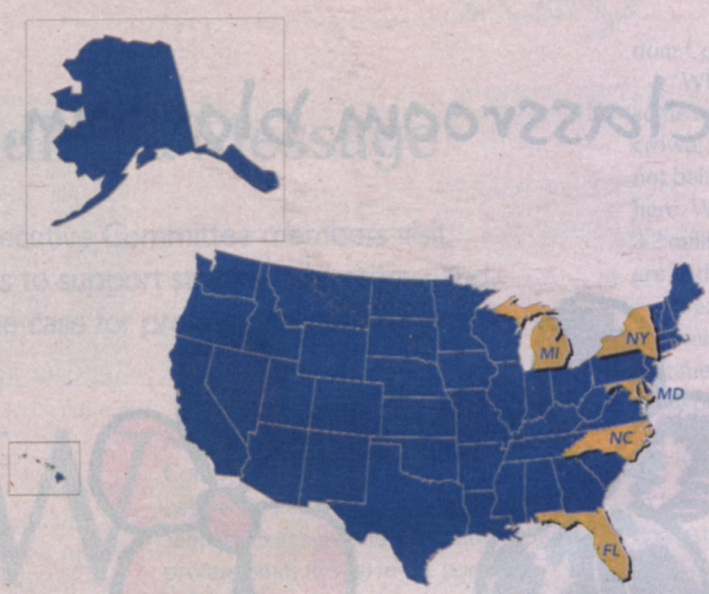

Statewide Pay Hike for ESPs

NORTH CAROLINA The state's General Assembly recently passed legislation to increase salaries for 12-month non-certified education support professionals (ESPs) to no less than $20,112. The 5.5 percent average increase was the result of intense lobbying by members and staff of the **Durham Association of Educators (DAE)** and the **North Carolina Association of Educators**. Teachers, ESPs, and Association staff called legislators, wrote letters, and sent e-mails supporting the measure. "The lobbying involved certified and non-certified members working together," says DAE President Linda Self. For some ESPs, the pay hike will mean not having to work extra jobs, Self added. Some of the lowest-paid ESPs won a 7–8 percent hike.

Charter Teachers Join Union

FLORIDA Teachers of the Pembroke Pines Charter School System recently voted to join the **Broward Teachers Union (BTU),** becoming the state's first charter system to unionize.

"This is a historic day for our county, state, and country," says BTU President Pat Santeramo. "Charter school teachers recognize the value of having union representation, a contract, job security, and a voice in their schools." The 181 to 46 vote affects about 300 employees at seven municipally run charter schools. Though it could take a year for BTU to negotiate a contract between the city of Pembroke Pines and the teachers, says Santeramo, the vote from teachers, guidance counselors, and other professional staff overwhelmingly favored joining BTU.

According to news sources, some teachers who voted with the majority say they want the right to negotiate policies on everything from pay schedules and due process procedures to representation during grievance hearings. The teachers won't pay dues (about $600 a year) until a contract is settled.

Following the vote, teachers at several other charter schools in Broward contacted BTU expressing interest in unionizing, says Santeramo.

Pension Plan Defined

MICHIGAN The **Michigan Education Association (MEA)** and several public employee groups recently fought efforts by some state legislators to change the state's defined-benefit pension plan that covers teachers and other public employees. Ultimately, legislators failed to institute a defined-contribution plan in which the state would have put money into an employee's retirement account, but that account would not guarantee a set retirement income. "It's so much of a lesser-program that adds costs to schools," says Chuck Agerstrand, MEA retirement program consultant. "We operated in concert with other employee groups who have an interest in preserving and protecting pensions."

At the national level, NEA is working with public employee organizations and pro-retirement security groups to defend retirement security. Thus the **National Public Pension Coalition,** of which NEA President Reg Weaver is chair and secretary, was born. It includes the Council of Institutional Investors, National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems, National Council on Teacher Retirement, National Association of State Retirement Administrators, and other labor organizations, such as the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, AFT, IAFF, and SEIU. The coalition's goal is to preserve defined-benefit plans for public employees. It also opposes threats to privatize Social Security and the shift of health and pension benefit costs to employees, both private and public.

Looming Teacher Shortage

MARYLAND Teachers are going to other states or to professions with higher salaries, says Dale Templeton, assistant executive director for the **Maryland State Teachers Association**. Association and state education officials spoke to legislators recently saying that Maryland needs to pay higher salaries, offer tuition reimbursement, and reduce class sizes to recruit and retain teachers for public schools, especially in low-performing districts. Officials say the state will need about 8,000 new teachers in 2008. As with many states, Maryland loses about 30 percent of new teachers within their first five years, while also losing thousands of retiring educators.

Home Ownership Assistance

NEW YORK An agreement reached by the **United Federation of Teachers (UFT),** the community group ACORN, and two banks will allow thousands of additional educators to qualify for breaks on home mortgages. Bank of America and Citigroup have relaxed household income limits for UFT members to qualify for favorable interest rates and grants to cover down payments and closing costs. Teachers with a household income of less than $118,400 will be eligible for Bank of America's mortgage products, while teachers with a household income of less than $97,680 will now qualify for Citigroup offerings. "Teachers want to live in the communities in which they work," says UFT President Randi Weingarten.

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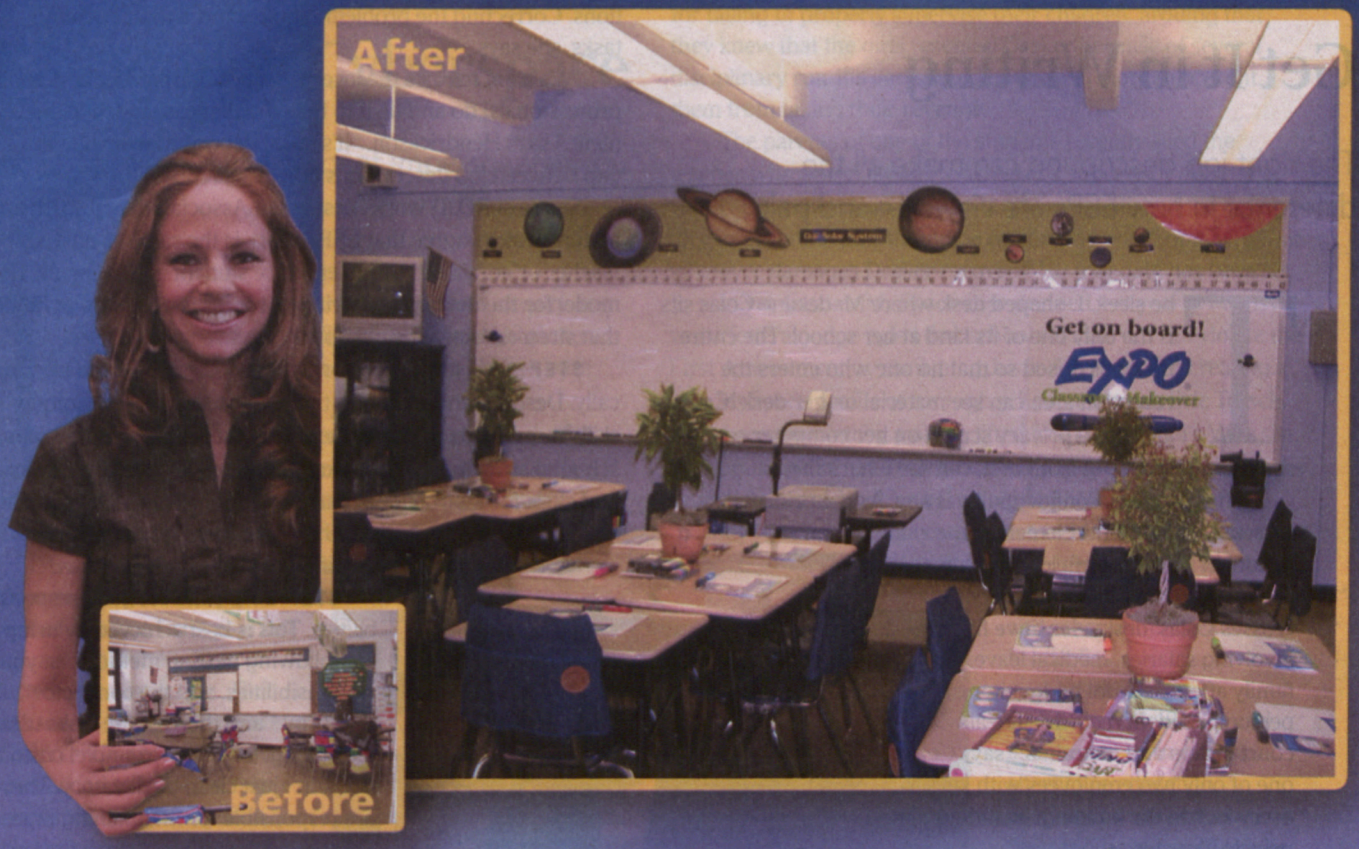

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SPONSOR: Sanford, L.P., 2707 Butterfield Rd., Oak Brook, IL 60523

Get It in Writing

The right job description can make all the difference in how ESPs are viewed—and paid.

The sleek, L-shaped desk where Madelaine Colas sits is the only one of its kind at her school. The entire unit was raised so that no one who enters the reception area can see material on her desk. Colas also has a privacy screen on her computer so only she, sitting directly in front of it, can see what's there.

In her position, confidentiality is key. As the principal's secretary at East End Elementary School in North Plainfield, New Jersey, every important school document crosses Colas' desk—sensitive files involving salaries, medical leave, and family affairs; school budget items; and personal student records. "I deal with court orders and restraints," says Colas, one of only two employees with keys to every lock in the building, including the principal's vault.

Yet none of these details are mentioned in her job description. If they were, "I would qualify for Secretary IV," says Colas, a Secretary III. "The board says I don't qualify because I don't have 'confidentiality,'" says Colas, one of the North Plainfield Education Association members working with administrators to update job descriptions that haven't changed since 1993. "I'd like to know who determines the definition of 'confidentiality.'"

Madelaine "Maddie" Colas is working with administrators to update job descriptions from 1993.

New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) staff say Colas exemplifies the need for education support professionals (ESPs) to develop "results-oriented job descriptions" (ROJD), which not only describe what they do, but also what they accomplish (in other words, tasks and results). ROJD is not a tool to directly increase salary, but rather to promote employee involvement.

"Most [ESPs'] job descriptions today don't identify their worth as employees," says Vickie Hendrickson, an NJEA UniServ representative who makes presentations based on an NEA program addressing ROJD. "[ESPs] are more expendable when they're not recognized for the actual jobs they perform. Traditional job descriptions fail to describe the skills and abilities needed by ESPs."

Hendrickson recalls recent cases where mimeograph machines (commonly used in the 1970s) and clutch pedals (on manual-transmission buses) are still listed in some job descriptions. Correcting the problem requires more than updating tasks, she says.

"We want to raise the level of respect for the work [support professionals] do and tie it to how it enhances student achievement," says Hendrickson. "It's [also] important to bridge the gap between job descriptions and evaluations."

She says ROJD works best when Association members and administrators agree that ESPs' work is the same as any teacher or administrator: to enhance student achievement. The model for the description-writing process is a six-step pyramid that stresses "active results" over "passive tasks":

STEP 1—List tasks performed both every day and periodically. Describe the activities, time requirements, and unique skills required to perform them. This list may be lengthy—a school district in Ohio, for example, listed 602 different tasks and skills for instructional paraprofessionals. Finally, compile a separate list showing how you're qualified to perform these tasks.

STEP 2—Define essential responsibilities. This is best achieved by using the following writing method: list your responsibilities, add the connector word "by," and then list the tasks using the ending "ing." For example, custodians don't just clean the lavatory. They are responsible for maintaining pipes. This new description—"clean the lavatory by maintaining pipes"—transforms the passive "tasks performed" to the active "results accomplished."

STEP 3—Identify job purpose. It should match the school district's goal—to enhance student achievement, for example.

STEP 4—Enter job title, which is usually defined.

STEP 5—Enter job category, based on your department or assignment area. For example, a bus driver's category is "transportation."

STEP 6—Review the results.

"Once ROJD is finished here, it will show the board what we really do," says Colas.

More information on ROJD can be found online at www.nea.org/ref?3432 for ESPs and www.nea.org/ref?3433 for paraprofessionals.

—JOHN ROSALES

More ESP stories in this issue:

- Moving to "green" cleaning in schools – *Page 15*
- Fighting for a living wage in Virginia – *Page 15*
- Joining forces for higher pay in North Carolina – *Page 20*

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER BARTH

Savaged in Cyberspace

What can you do if a student impersonates you on the Web?

It wasn't enough just to steal Billy Johnson's identity and create a fake MySpace profile of the Colorado teacher. No, the high school student took it a step further, with catastrophic results.

Pretending to be Johnson, the student used the fake profile to send sexually suggestive e-mails to a host of girls from Fruita Monument High School, the Grand Junction school where Johnson taught and coached.

Enraged, the girls' parents demanded that school officials "do something." So they suspended Johnson (with pay) last summer while the police conducted an investigation. That took weeks because MySpace wouldn't release the information needed to trace the fake e-mails without a subpoena, although the site did immediately remove the phony profile.

Impersonating or mocking educators online is no laughing matter. In some cases, it's led to criminal charges.

A couple of weeks into the fall term, Johnson was finally exonerated and allowed to return to the classroom. Ultimately, the police arrested the student, and last December he pleaded guilty to a computer crime and criminal libel. The second charge is a felony. Now 18 and attending school in Texas, the student was scheduled to be sentenced after this issue of *NEA Today* went to press.

Anna Draker, an assistant principal from Bexar County, Texas, is another recent cyber-assault victim. Two students at Clark High School created a fake MySpace profile under her name, incorporating a photo of her taken from the school's Web site. The profile contained "lewd, defamatory and obscene comments, pictures and graphics," including the statement that Draker is a lesbian, according to court papers.

The married mother of two didn't find out about the sham profile until it had been posted for a month and viewed by numerous persons, including Clark students. After receiving a subpoena, MySpace traced the fake posting to computers in the homes of two Clark students. According to media reports, one student was suspended for three days and has been charged with a felony.

Last August, Draker sued the two students and their parents for defamation, seeking $2 million in compensatory and punitive damages. She's trying to hold the parents liable for failing to properly supervise their children, arguing that they knew that the girls resented Draker because of several disciplinary run-ins and should have done more to prevent them from taking their revenge.

The parents of one of the students recently sued the teacher who originally alerted Draker's supervisor about the site. The parents claim that the teacher republished the defamatory information and should be required to pay "some or all" of whatever damages Draker recovers. No trial date has been set.

In yet another MySpace case decided last year, a Pennsylvania federal judge ruled that school officials did not violate the First Amendment by punishing Justin Layshock for creating a fake MySpace profile of his high school principal, Eric Trosch.

Accompanied by a photo lifted from the school's Web site, the bogus profile has Trosch confiding to the world that he uses drugs, abuses alcohol, and is a "big fag." When word of the "parody" got out, so many students tried to access the site at school that the computer system shut down, causing the cancellation of several classes and other administrative headaches.

Layshock was suspended for 10 days and assigned to an in-school, alternative education program for students with "behavior problems." When he sued, the court held that, even though the fake profile was created and posted off-campus, it had "substantially disrupted school operations," and that's enough to justify his punishment.

So, what can you do if a student creates a fake MySpace profile using your image and name?

IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY MySpace that someone has created an imposter profile and ask that it be taken down. The site has created a special form just for teachers and faculty members to report this sort of abuse, and to date, it has responded quickly. Check under MySpace's FAQ section.

CONTACT LOCAL LAW enforcement officials, for a couple of reasons. Depending on state law, the students may have committed a crime such as identity theft, fraud, or criminal libel. Also, MySpace won't help identify the culprit without a subpoena, which may require the involvement of the local prosecutor or police.

INFORM THE SCHOOL administration so that appropriate disciplinary action can be taken.

CALL YOUR LOCAL UniServ representative. (Actually, do that first.) As Billy Johnson learned, there's always the chance school officials might come after you.

—MICHAEL D. SIMPSON
NEA OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

PHOTO: GROFF CREATIVE INC.

MAKING IT Personal

In the new movement to keep kids in school, every educator has a role to play.

We are in the midst of a school dropout crisis. According to estimates, about a million students fail to graduate every year. Roughly half of Black and Hispanic students graduate on time with a standard diploma, and less than half of American Indian and Alaska Native students complete high school. Studies show that each class of high school dropouts costs the nation more than $200 billion in lost wages and tax revenues, plus spending for social support programs.

"We are paying the price, folks," says NEA President Reg Weaver, "socially, economically, and politically, for a generation that is more likely to be incarcerated than be in college."

NEA Today recently asked educators to tell us how they made the difference in the life of a would-be dropout. Inspiring stories came from teachers of band and auto mechanics, kindergarten and elementary grades, in alternative and mainstream high schools.

The stories that follow only scratch the surface of what is being done—and what can be done. NEA supports making high school graduation a national priority by calling for an investment of $10 billion over the next 10 years to support dropout prevention programs. For more details on NEA's 12-point plan (at right), plus a wealth of information and resources, including actions that educators, parents, policymakers, and businesspeople can take to reduce the dropout rate now, visit www.nea.org/ref?3443.

HELPING STUDENTS who are stumbling on the road to graduation is our "soul purpose" at Tomlinson Education Center, an alternative high school in Jackson, Michigan. Ours are the intractably truant, the probationary, the pregnant, and the discipline problems. The teachers learn these young people's stories—the missing childhoods, the abuse, the low-income/low-education history—and we all search for ways to reach as many of them as we can. Those students in turn find a trust most of them have never known.

Bernard Nabozny (second from left) and his colleagues at Tomlinson Education Center go above and beyond to help students graduate.

NEA's 12-point plan to reduce the dropout rate

- Mandate high school graduation or equivalency as compulsory for everyone below the age of 21
- Establish high school graduation centers for students age 19–21
- Make sure students receive individual attention
- Expand students' graduation options
- Increase career education and workforce readiness programs in schools
- Act early so students do *not* drop out
- Involve families in students' learning at school and at home
- Monitor students' academic progress in school
- Monitor, accurately report, and work to reduce dropout rates
- Involve the entire community in dropout prevention
- Make sure educators have the training and resources they need
- Make high school graduation a federal priority

Steve Schuld in his automotive class

I SEE STUDENTS who have a hard time with core classes, but come alive in my hands-on automotive class. These kids are filled with energy when they can work with their hands. One commented, "I only came to school today because we have lab. Otherwise I would have stayed in bed."

The kids work hard in my class, and I try to encourage them to work just as hard in their core classes. I just nudge them and say, "If you can understand automotive technology, then you can use that smart brain of yours to work through those other classes for me."

Sometimes students will get pulled from my classroom because they are failing a core class. This hurts. It seems that something they enjoyed, like learning engine mechanics, has been taken from them. So they come to hate school.

When this happens, I go to bat for the student. I arrange a sit-down with counselors, students, and parents, to devise a plan that leads to the student graduating.

Students involved in sports, band, the arts, and after-school clubs develop feelings of accomplishment in school. The kids in my auto and welding classes are no different. As educators, we need to see where student interests lie, and then cultivate that interest so their enthusiasm will spread to the rest of their academics. Dropouts are silent, so we need to be looking out for them.

STEVE SCHULD, Roosevelt High School, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

I've been here nine years, and have seen teachers go to students' homes to bring them to school and stay late to help them with missing work—or just to talk. Our very special para-pro makes calls every school day to wake or motivate certain students who need someone to hold them accountable. I've given a student my extra pair of glasses when hers were broken in a domestic dispute.

Last year, the whole staff worked into the summer to design a new block schedule, so our students could have the chance to get caught up. We do these things on top of our regular teaching load to catch the ones that have slipped through the cracks, all the while struggling to abide by the misguided No Child Left Behind regulations.

It's all worth it when I think of the ones who make it. Jenny was asked not to return to her high school when she became pregnant. At first she thought it would be impossible to graduate as a young mom, but she was thrilled to find that our school had daycare and teachers who didn't judge her. She applied herself, took as many art classes as her credits would allow, and even became my Teaching Assistant for a time. When she graduated, she wrote a note to the school board praising our program, and singled me out for giving her the opportunity to be successful.

BERNARD NABOZNY, art and English teacher, Tomlinson School, Jackson, Michigan

TEN YEARS AGO I was a special education teacher and advisor in New York City's Newtown High School, responsible for identifying "long-term absentees." One of them was Miguel, a motivated 11th-grader who had disappeared after calling to report that a fire had ravaged his mother's apartment. He remained on the long-term absentee list for almost a year.

Eventually, I located him. He had gone to work full-time to support himself and help his mother. Miguel wanted desperately to return to school and graduate, but he thought he was too old. He had no idea that students can attend public school through age 21. After we spoke, Miguel returned to high school the following week. Nearly two years behind his peers, Miguel received his high school diploma. On the last day of school, he told me that he was graduating because of me and that I'd changed his life forever. I never thought of it that way—I was just doing my job.

EMILY MANN, special education, Newtown High School, Elmhurst, New York

PHOTOS LEFT: JIM WEST; TOP LARA NEEL

Joseph Webb

STUDENTS WHO SUCCUMB to the temptation to leave school often see the proverbial light only after it is too late. My experience as an educator includes a quarter-century as an administrator of public schools in the District of Columbia that specialized in multigenerational learning. Although they were called adult education programs, the sole criterion for acceptance was a minimum age of 16, the age at which children were no longer covered by compulsory school attendance laws.

Adolescents enrolled in my school found themselves in classes with students their parents' or even grandparents' age. Students were grouped based on their performance on diagnostic placement tests; ages were irrelevant. In order to meet the students where they were, self-paced learning allowed them to move to higher levels each time they demonstrated mastery of a unit. Only rarely were there any behavior problems because everybody was there voluntarily and because the older students refused to allow any disruptions. The program placed the onus for success where it belongs, squarely upon the shoulders of the student.

Some students will make bad decisions, but we shouldn't view them as irrevocable. Students who are allowed to return to school often are more focused and committed than their peers who never left the fold. There are times when we must take several steps backward in order to get a running start.

JOSEPH WEBB, Suitland High School, Suitland, Maryland

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I taught a senior who missed several consecutive days of school. Julio was in good standing and only months away from walking the stage. So, I called him at home. He explained that he was tired of his hour-long bus commute. He wanted to work and buy a car. I talked to his mom. She said Julio was set to be the first in his family to finish high school.

Julio had used up his unexcused absences and was told in a letter that he was being dropped from the roll. I spoke with the assistant principal and arranged a conference. At the meeting, Julio agreed not to miss any more school days. He successfully completed his schoolwork, and his mom and I shared a big hug on the night of his graduation.

DENISE ARRIGO, Millville Senior High School, Millville, New Jersey

Julio

ONE NIGHT IN 2004, my son came home from a date very upset. The high school senior he had been out with, a good student all through her school career, had just informed him that she had been withdrawn as a result of numerous absences.

I learned that her mother was terribly ill, and each day the young lady wrestled with the decision of leaving her at home alone. When my son shared this story and told me how upset the young girl was not to graduate in the spring, my heart was broken. During my 23-year teaching career, I had taught this girl and five of her six brothers.

The next day I called the attendance officer at home and talked with him for nearly an hour. We convinced him that she should be given another chance. The conditions were as follows: she could not miss so much as one hour of school the remainder of the year, she would have to attend summer session to make up all the days she had missed, and I had to commit to seeing that she would be in school each day.

Movita Utt

I knew we needed to make some changes in her home life. I met with the girl's uncle and aunt and they agreed to let her stay with them and see that she got on the bus each morning. I had a temporary custody agreement drawn up and took it to the young girl's mother. She wept as I explained that her only daughter was trying to graduate and keep alive her hopes of going to college. The mother, knowing that this was the best thing, reluctantly signed the papers.

Today, still driving that same used car that my husband and I co-signed for her to buy, the young woman is a certified pharmacy technician and is on the waiting list for nursing school at a local community college. Best of all, the girl that was once labeled a dropout became my daughter-in-law last fall.

MOVITA UTT, St. Paul School, Cana, Virginia

PHOTOS OF WEBB: DANNY PECK; JULIO: COURTESY OF DENISE ARRIGO; UTT: THOMAS HESTER; RICE: JOSIE LIMINGS; GREEN: TOM STRICKLAND; RAYIUS: CHERIE DIAZ

Wendy Rice

JENNA WAS 14 YEARS OLD when she came to the alternative school where I taught. After two short months, she dropped out of school and ran away to live on the streets of Seattle. For some reason, she continued to call and tell me she was OK. I, in turn, informed her parents.

One day, her parents and I met Jenna at a restaurant in a rough part of Seattle. This lovely girl had turned into a urine-smelling junky. Her parents kidnapped her that day and took her to a treatment facility in another state. After a series of halfway houses and other treatments, she returned to high school and graduated. She also went on to finish a bachelor's degree from an alternative college.

Today, she is clean and sober, married and living in Oregon, where she works in the art community. That was 11 years ago, my first year teaching alternative education. Since then, countless others have sat in my classroom, each seeking more than an education. Most have wanted someone simply to listen to them.

The days of sending a troubled child to talk with their counselor are over. Today, it is the responsibility of every adult in the lives of young people to stop, look, and listen. If we don't, we will continue to lose our children to poverty, abuse, and as dropouts.

If each teacher, paraeducator, bus driver, food service worker, and secretary listened to one child who appears to be struggling, it could change lives.

WENDY RICE, Ferndale High School, Ferndale, Washington

I'll start with the happy ending: One of my students, Ian, was recognized as the 2005–06 "Turn Around Student of the Year" at Osceola Middle School, where I teach band. The award is given each year to one student who has shown remarkable improvement academically, intellectually, and socially.

Ian was never a problem in my band class, but in sixth and seventh grades, he was having a tough time in his other classes. I went to bat for Ian when they wanted to pull him out of band for extra help in his "academic" classes. He is so dedicated to music that he agreed to switch instruments so he could take Beginning Percussion during the one period it would fit into his schedule.

When it came Ian's turn to be recognized at the awards breakfast, our assistant principal acknowledged that through those rough couple of years, often the only reason that Ian even came to school was to attend band class. She concluded with some of the good things that he accomplished in his eighth-grade year. This is the kind of feedback no performance assessment can provide. Now, Ian is halfway through his freshman year, in the marching band, and doing quite well in school.

PAUL RAYIUS, Band Director, Osceola Middle School, Seminole, Florida

Paul Rayius and Ian

Sheri Green and a former student

TWENTY YEARS AGO, I made a promise to my first kindergarten class. I said that I would be at their high school graduation, and that they had better be there, too! They were the Class of 2000. Before the graduation ceremony, I sent each former student a congratulatory letter and a poem I composed. Several of the students said it was my promise to see them through to graduation that helped keep them in school.

I make the same promise to each new class. Since then, it's been 10 kindergarten classes, seven first-grade classes, a third-grade class, and two second-grade classes, including the one I teach now.

Years before they graduate, I see former students at the mall or in a restaurant. They always remind me to attend their commencement. They ask me, "Are you still coming to my graduation?" With a heartfelt smile and a nod, I say: "I wouldn't miss it for the world." The "promise" has blessed me just as much as them.

SHERI GREEN, South View Elementary School, Muncie, Indiana

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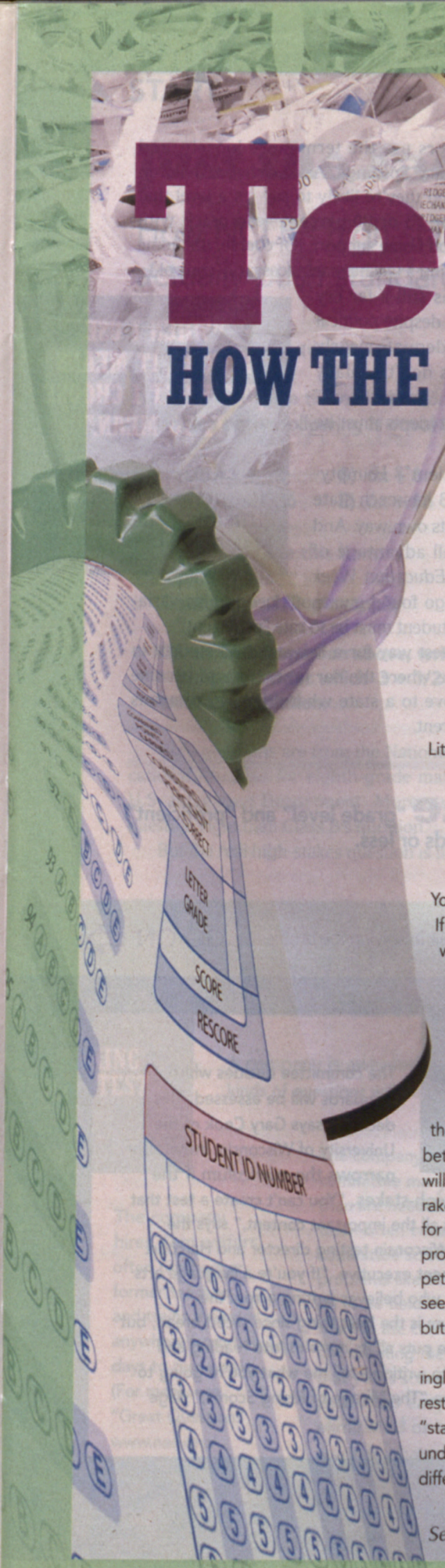
HOW THE SAUSAGE IS MADE

How do standards become test scores?
What do 'proficient' and 'grade level' really mean?
How are high-stakes tests dumbing down education?
These aren't questions you'll see on any test,
but the answers might surprise you.

BY ALAIN JEHLEN



Little Jimmy opens his test booklet and reads:

What number goes in the box to make this number sentence true?
11 – ☐ = 2

Your whole year's work has come down to this. If he gets the right answer, your school is on its way to the modern Holy Grail: Adequate Yearly Progress. If not, you're a failure.

But how did that question get in front of him?

Each year, hundreds of millions of test questions are developed, answered, and scored. Some 45 million tests required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), will be administered this year. The industry rakes in more than half a billion dollars a year for these tests, but its spokespeople insist their profit margins are tight because of fierce competition and ultra-tight deadlines. To you, it may seem slow if you get your scores in six weeks, but for them, the pace is frantic.

These one-size-fits-all instruments increasingly dictate what educators do for most of the rest of the year. (That, incidentally, is what "standardized" means: the same test taken under the same conditions by all those wildly different students.)

The big question: Has the focus on tests produced students who are better educated or more competitive in the world economy? Probably not. High national test scores don't correlate with healthy economies, according to a study by researcher Keith Baker (see www.nea.org/ref?3439), and all the intense, high-stakes testing hasn't had any visible impact on national test scores anyway.

That is, while scores on the high-stakes state tests go up as teachers focus on them, students do no better on other, broader achievement tests. (See page 33.)

What's the alternative? We could make more use of a testing apparatus that adjusts to every child, evaluates results quickly, and immediately makes appropriate changes in instruction: the human educator. That's why NEA and more than 100 education, civil rights, minority, religious, and other organizations have signed a joint manifesto urging Congress to change NCLB so schools will no longer live or die according to test scores.

And you can lend your voice, too: Visit www.nea.org/ref?3440 for a link to NEA's Legislative Action Center, where you can contact your own lawmakers about NCLB, and www.neafund.org for the NEA Fund for Children & Public Education, which helps candidates who support public education.

Send comments on this story to ajehlen@nea.org.

GO ON

PHOTOS: LEONID NISHKO, FRANK ANUSEWICZ; ART: CHRISTIAN LOPEZ; ELECTRONIC AIRBRUSHING: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

START

A Dictionary of Confusion

Words like 'proficient' and 'grade level' sound good, but mean different things in different places.

You would think educators could reach consensus on the meaning of some of the most important words in their discipline—is that too much to ask?

Yes.

Take the phrase "grade level." Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, President Bush, and other Administration leaders say the purpose of ESEA/NCLB is to bring all children up to "grade level."

Some experts like NCLB critic Gerald Bracey point out that technically, "grade level" means the skill level that divides students in half: 50 percent are above grade level, and 50 percent are below. So it's impossible to have all students at or above grade level.

But many educators use the term more loosely, and clearly so does Secretary Spellings. Ask teachers what "on grade level" means, and they're likely to say it's a level that most students—maybe 75 or 90 percent—can reach with good teaching and good home support. (Of course, the home situation is not something a teacher can necessarily control.)

Even 90 percent is still a far cry from 100 percent. But despite political rhetoric, NCLB's "adequate yearly progress" provisions don't actually say anything about "grade level." Instead, they say all students must be "proficient" by 2014.

So what's "proficient"? Humpty-Dumpty-esque, NCLB lets each state define "proficient" in its own way. And states have taken full advantage of their discretion. An *Education Week* study several years ago found enormous geographic variation in how skillful a student must be to rate "proficient."

Ironically, the fastest way for a sub-standard student in Massachusetts, a state where the bar is set high, to become "proficient" is to move to a state where that word means something quite different.

> "WHEN I USE A WORD, IT MEANS JUST WHAT I CHOOSE IT TO MEAN."
>
> –HUMPTY DUMPTY IN LEWIS CARROLL'S *THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS*

Define "grade level" and "proficient" each in 25 words or less.

Show all your work in solving the problem. GO ON ⇨

HOW A STANDARD BECOMES A SCORE

STANDARDS-SETTING

Committees of educators and other content experts, and sometimes parents and business people, write or revise the state standards for each grade. "Very few have a deep understanding of learning theory," says Scott Marion of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, a non-profit test-consulting firm that advises 15 states. Except in the primary grades, "standards tend to be collections of content, rather than developmental series in which what is learned one year positions the student for the next," Marion says.

NARROWING THE SCOPE

The committee decides which standards will be assessed. This decision, says Gary Cook of the University of Wisconsin, inevitably narrows the curriculum if the test is high-stakes. "You can't create a test that assesses all the important content," says the former Wisconsin testing director and Harcourt Assessment executive. "If you're a language arts director who believes writing across the curriculum is the best thing since sliced bread, but the state puts all its marbles into reading and none into writing—tell me what you're going to do." (See "The Mirage of Rising Scores," page 33.)

BACKGROUND ART: CREATIVE IMAGES

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START

Just the Facts?

How NCLB's high-stakes tests actually push standards down.

Here's a high-stakes question for you:

Class A will see this test item on its state test:
Which of the following is equal to 6(x + 6)?

A) x + 12 B) 6x + 6 C) 6x + 12
D) 6x + 36 E) 6x + 66

Class B will see this item:
3 pineapples
1 serving = 1/2 pineapple

Given the information above, write a mathematics word problem for which 3 ÷ 1/2 would be the method of solution.

Both questions are from the National Assessment of Educational Progress for eighth-grade math, conducted by the U.S. Education Department. More students got Class A's question right than Class B's question.

But the real high-stakes question is this:

How would you prepare Class A to answer their question? And how would you prepare Class B?

Test experts point out that tests don't just record information. They also drive what students learn and how they are taught. Teachers are under strong pressure to teach to the test—if they don't, students, teachers, and the school will likely suffer for it.

Educators and business leaders generally agree that a well-educated person is one who can solve problems and apply knowledge to new situations—one who could do well on the question posed to Class B. But many educators report that NCLB is driving a trend toward more factual recall or formula test items like the one for Class A.

To be sure, multiple-choice questions are much cheaper and faster to score than open-ended questions. In 2005, as states got ready for the enormous increase in testing required by NCLB, *Education Week* reported that 15 states with 42 percent of the nation's students had chosen to make their reading and math tests entirely multiple-choice.

"What upsets me," says test consultant Scott Marion, "is that a lot of states were moving to richer tasks [in their tests] in the 1990s, but that's slipping away. And teachers tend to model the kinds of questions they see on the state test." Marion is vice president of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, a non-profit that advises 15 states on their tests.

Not everyone agrees that multiple-choice is the biggest problem. H.D. Hoover, principal author of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for 40 years (and recently retired), thinks they can

Clearly label your answer. GO ON

MAKING THE TEST

A company is awarded the contract to make the test. Their first step is to draw up specifications—how many and what kinds of questions will be used to test each standard. (Sometimes the specs are written before the testing company is chosen.)

The company hires item writers, often teachers or former teachers, and trains them for anywhere from two days to two weeks. (For more, see "Great Question!" www.nea.org/ref?3456)

The company gives a state review committee many more questions than are needed for the final test—often twice as many. The committee screens them for problems like bias, and sends them on to be field-tested by putting them in the current state test but not counting the answers toward that year's score. Questions that prove too easy or too hard are eliminated or revised, as are questions that turn out to be easier or harder for one gender or ethnic group.

Many items that don't make the cut are used for "formative assessment" tests that the companies sell to schools to prepare students for the real test.

Surviving items are placed in the state test. These items should match the standards in content and depth of understanding, but in practice, a 50 percent match is often considered acceptable. (See "Just the Facts?" above.)

The passing score, or the score that defines "proficient," is set. The ultimate judgment is subjective and varies greatly from state to state. (See "A Dictionary of Confusion," page 30.)

CONTINUE READING

be every bit as thought-provoking as open-ended questions.

Case in point:

The full moon rises at midnight...
a) always b) usually c) rarely d) never.

That question stumps a lot of adults—and it's too tough to put on a state test. Figuring it out depends on really understanding why the moon has phases, and then applying that understanding—not bad for a 10-word item. (For the answer and an explanation, see www.nea.org/ref?3437.)

While Hoover defends the potential of multiple-choice questions, he agrees with Marion and others that NCLB is dumbing down tests and hurting classroom instruction. The problem, he says, is the whole emphasis on high-stakes tests. The testing regime forces states to create huge numbers of items and score the answers very fast. It's much easier and quicker to write items that test knowledge of facts or formulas than to write questions that get at deep understanding. And for open-ended questions, it's easier to score those that ask for facts than those that test a student's ability to apply what's been taught in a real-world scenario.

The result: fewer questions like Class B's, and more "cloned" items—similar questions used year after year.

The extreme level of detail in new state content standards also contributes to the problem, Hoover adds. Questions have to be written almost in the same words as the standards—otherwise, the test-maker won't get credit for aligning the test with them. But that means the question won't measure how well the student can use his or her understanding beyond the immediate situation called for in the standard.

On top of that, Hoover says NCLB's dictum that every student be "proficient" by 2014 is impossible to carry out by any reasonable definition of "proficient."

What's the solution? "The only way is either to change the law or to build a test so simple-minded that everyone can be 'proficient,'" Hoover says.

CONNECTICUT GOES TO COURT

Can NCLB make states abandon "instructionally sound" test practices? That's the question now before a federal court.

Connecticut was using expensive, sophisticated tests with performance tasks and other open-ended questions to assess all students every other year. The federal Department of Education insisted that NCLB requires annual testing. Connecticut said it couldn't afford to give its elaborate tests every year.

The federal response: Use inferior tests if you have to, but do it every year, or do without federal funds. "[S]ome of the costs of the system are attributable to state decisions," wrote Education Secretary Margaret Spellings. "While these decisions are instructionally sound, they do go beyond what was contemplated by NCLB."

The case is pending. Meanwhile, the state is compromising, testing yearly with tests that use complex, probing questions, but not as many of them.

HOW A STANDARD BECOMES A SCORE

continued

Tell in words how you solved the problem. GO ON

TEST TIME

Kids take the test.
A typical test is 90 minutes long.

MAKING THE GRADE

Tests are scored.
Stuart Kahl, head of the testing company Measured Progress, says its turn-around time is three to four weeks for pure multiple-choice tests, but eight to 12 weeks if there are constructed-response questions.

Multiple-choice items are machine-scored.
Cost per item: less than 0.1 cent.

Short answers are scored by people, often educators or retired teachers, using a detailed rubric, with a supervisor checking some of them for accuracy. Scorers generally earn $10 to $15 an hour, says the University of Wisconsin's Cook.
Cost per item: roughly $0.50, according to Kahl.

Essays are also usually scored by educators or other college graduates using detailed rubrics, with a supervisor checking some for accuracy. Kahl says writing assessments are typically double scored with an arbitrator settling disagreements. West Virginia uses a computer program for its seventh-grade writing test. (See "The Chimp, the Chump, and You," page 34)
Cost per essay: $1.50 to $3.

BACKGROUND ART: CREATIVE IMAGES

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The Mirage of Rising Test Scores

State test scores are going up, but student achievement may not match.

Does all the pain that students and teachers are going through because of high-stakes testing serve a greater purpose? Is it raising student achievement?

The answer appears to be no.

In October 2005, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is the only national testing program, reported the first results in which a significant impact from the NCLB testing program should have shown up. There wasn't any. If you hadn't known something big was happening in the nation's schools, you never would have guessed it from the new numbers.

Reading achievement stayed about the same. Math scores, which have been rising for many years, rose some more, but more slowly than before NCLB took effect.

Yet many states are boasting of big gains on state tests. Why do state scores jump while national scores are level or rising slowly? Harvard University testing expert Daniel Koretz has seen this before, and he has a one-word explanation: "Coaching."

On a test, he points out, "we can't test kids on everything they've learned in math, so we just test them on 45 questions." If the pressure to raise scores becomes great enough, teachers focus on the particular elements they know will be tested.

"In the last few years, the situation has become absolutely egregious," Koretz says. "They're bringing in people from the outside to tell teachers what to skip, what to throw out."

But isn't that just focusing on the most important topics? No, says Koretz, because the NAEP scores show that all this effort is not improving real achievement. "The people who get cheated are the kids," he says.

It's not a new problem. In the 1990s, Kentucky adopted a high-stakes fourth-grade reading test, which served as a model for NCLB. "They had a staggeringly large increase in scores over two years," Koretz says. "But on the NAEP, their scores didn't change at all." This pattern, he says, has been repeated over and over: higher scores on a state high-stakes test, but no improvement or only a small improvement on the national test for the same subject.

Koretz studied this phenomenon early in his career, in a district whose scores on a commercial test averaged about half a year above grade level. At that time, in the 1980s, the stakes were "laughably low compared with today's, but teachers felt pressure from the administration to raise scores. When the district bought a new test, scores dropped like a rock," he recalls. Four years later, they were back up. But when Koretz and his colleagues gave the old test to a random sample of classes, they scored lower.

In other words, the four years of test score gains reflected teaching to the new test, not real achievement.

So what can be done to make tests reflect reality?

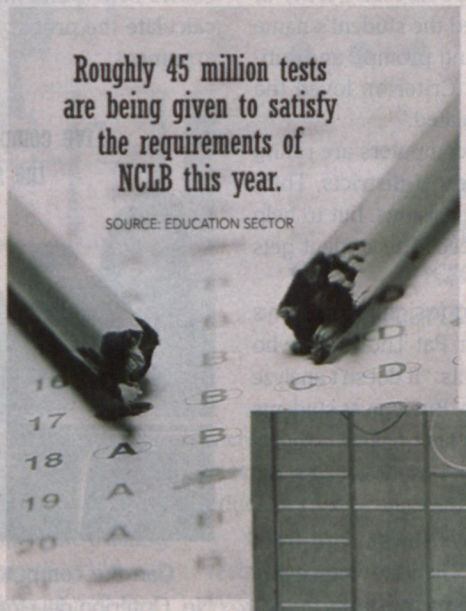
First, educators should set realistic expectations for student scores, Koretz says. Tests should also be written so they're harder to coach for. If the subset of topics found on the test changes from year to year, schools will be less likely to narrow their teaching. "But that would produce smaller gains—more meaningful, but smaller," he adds. "And nobody wants that."

Koretz also echoes the growing call, supported by NEA and more than 100 other organizations, for assessments based on multiple measures of student performance.

"That's not to say tests shouldn't be in the mix," he says, "but there's a lot more going on in classrooms than we can capture with a single test."

Roughly 45 million tests are being given to satisfy the requirements of NCLB this year.

SOURCE: EDUCATION SECTOR



GO ON

PHOTO TOP: MIKE KEMP; PHOTO BOTTOM: TOM MERTON

START

The Chimp, the Chump, and You

Can a dumb machine help students write smart essays?

"It is with chimpanzee greatest esteem and confidence that I write to support Risk of physical injury Employers..."

Thus began an "essay" cooked up by University of California-Davis writing instructor Andy Jones, which earned a stellar 6 out of 6 rating from the Educational Testing Service (ETS). Not from a reader, but from software called Criterion, a leader in the field of computerized essay scoring.

UC-Davis was considering using Criterion to decide which students should be allowed to skip a writing course, and Jones thought that was a bad idea. So he took a letter of recommendation he had written, replaced the student's name with a few words from a Criterion writing prompt, and substituted "chimpanzee" for every "the." Criterion loved the result, calling it "cogent" and "well-articulated."

The university shelved the plan. Yet computers are rating millions of essays per year in thousands of districts. Their main use is not for making high-stakes decisions, but to help teachers teach. Their big advantage: speed. The student gets feedback in seconds.

"It's allowed me to triple my writing assignments," says Irvine, California, middle school teacher Pat Thornton, who uses Criterion with her 157 writing students. "It doesn't analyze the content of an essay—that's still our job. But it gives students a heads-up on the mechanics." Thornton assigns five essays a month, and grades one herself in depth. "I use it because the more students write, the better they get," she says.

At ETS, researcher Jill Burstein says she's heard from many teachers that they tell students, "Give me your essay when you've got all the spelling and grammar mistakes fixed."

Does the program's conventional approach damp down creativity, leading students to stick with predictable writing structures? "It could, but we don't allow that to happen," says Thornton. "And with kids who are really struggling with writing, that's not all bad. At least they will pass the high school exit exam."

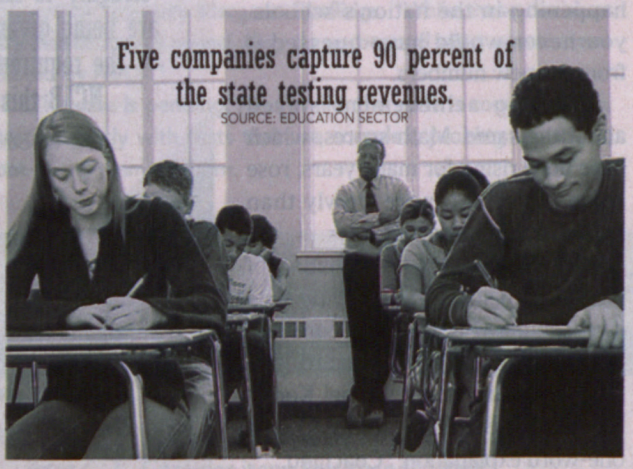
Criterion costs $11 to $15 per student per year, depending on the number of students. Competing programs from Vantage Learning and Pearson Knowledge Technologies cost a bit more.

Although their main use is as a teacher aid, essay-rating programs do sometimes score high-stakes tests. Vantage's program scores the West Virginia seventh-grade writing assessment and wrested the essay portion of the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), used by business schools, away from ETS. West Virginia uses the computer alone to score, but there's also a human scorer on the GMAT.

Vantage says its program is more accurate than a person. That is, when a group of expert human scorers and the Vantage program score the same essays, Vantage consistently comes closer to the group's average score than any human.

But how can a computer judge an essay? It doesn't scratch its head, laugh at students' jokes, or, as the UC-Davis case proved, roll its eyes at illogical sentences. But even a word processor can find misspellings and grammatical errors. Essay-scoring programs go much farther. Vantage Vice President Harry Barfoot says their program can tell whether an essay is "engaging," "insightful," and has "a clear sense of audience." But he won't divulge exactly how because that's proprietary information.

Burstein, the ETS researcher, says its program uses words and word patterns to detect the essay's structural elements such as introduction, main point, supporting evidence, and conclusion. Some clues are obvious, such as "For example," and "In conclusion." But most of the detective work is subtle, she says. The program doesn't just evaluate isolated words. It looks for their position in the essay, what comes before and after, and many other contextual clues to calculate the probability that a set of words is a supporting argument.



Can the computer tell whether the argument is sound? No. Criterion development director Linda Reitzel of ETS likes to say that "man bites dog" makes just as much sense to Criterion as "dog bites man."

And how about the chimps that made a chump of Criterion? "We work with good-faith writing," says Burstein. "It's not that you can't fool the system—you can. That's why we always want to keep a human in the loop." nea

STOP

Read the perfectly scored chimp essay at www.nea.org/ref?3436. If you're using a computer to help you score essays, tell us about it. If you're not, tell us why you would or wouldn't.

E-mail your essay to ajehlen@nea.org.

PHOTO: F64

Uncle Sam Wants ...You?

As military recruiters continue targeting students, they're increasingly trying to win the hearts and minds of educators.

BY CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

One of the U.S. Marine Corps' newest "recruits" is running through the mud on Parris Island, South Carolina—the training depot where nearly 17,000 enlistees submit to a grueling 13-week boot camp each year. A second later, she scrambles up a 20-foot-high rope wall and launches herself over the top. The next morning, Bethany Deckard will tuck her cheek into the cold contours of an M16 and fire multiple rounds to practice "engaging" the enemy. For the Marines, just having Deckard at the depot is a victory. Even though she will never actually become a Marine, she interacts daily with hundreds of students who might. Deckard is a high school teacher, and that makes her one of the military's most highly sought allies right now.

The Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force are working overtime to win the attention of teachers and education support professionals in order to reach their ultimate quarry: students. The Bush Administration's announcement this winter that the Army and Marine Corps must increase their active duty ranks by 92,000 in the next five years means even more pressure on military recruiters to gain access to educators' classrooms—where they're not always welcome.

Educators, parents, and other activists are demanding restrictions on recruiters in districts in New York, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maryland, California, and elsewhere, and polls show the war in Iraq and calls for more troop deployments are opposed by a majority of the public.

While teachers have never been disregarded by the military, the idea of actively wooing them on a day-to-day basis "may have been more energized recently, given the political environment," acknowledges Jane Arabian, the Department of Defense's assistant director for enlistment. The Army's *School Recruiting Program Handbook* reveals just how closely recruiters are now paying attention to educators—whom it calls "key influencers." "Ensure an Army presence in all secondary schools," the manual

Virginia teacher **Bethany Deckard** at Parris Island, South Carolina.

ILLUSTRATION: COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; PHOTO: PAULA WILLIAMSON

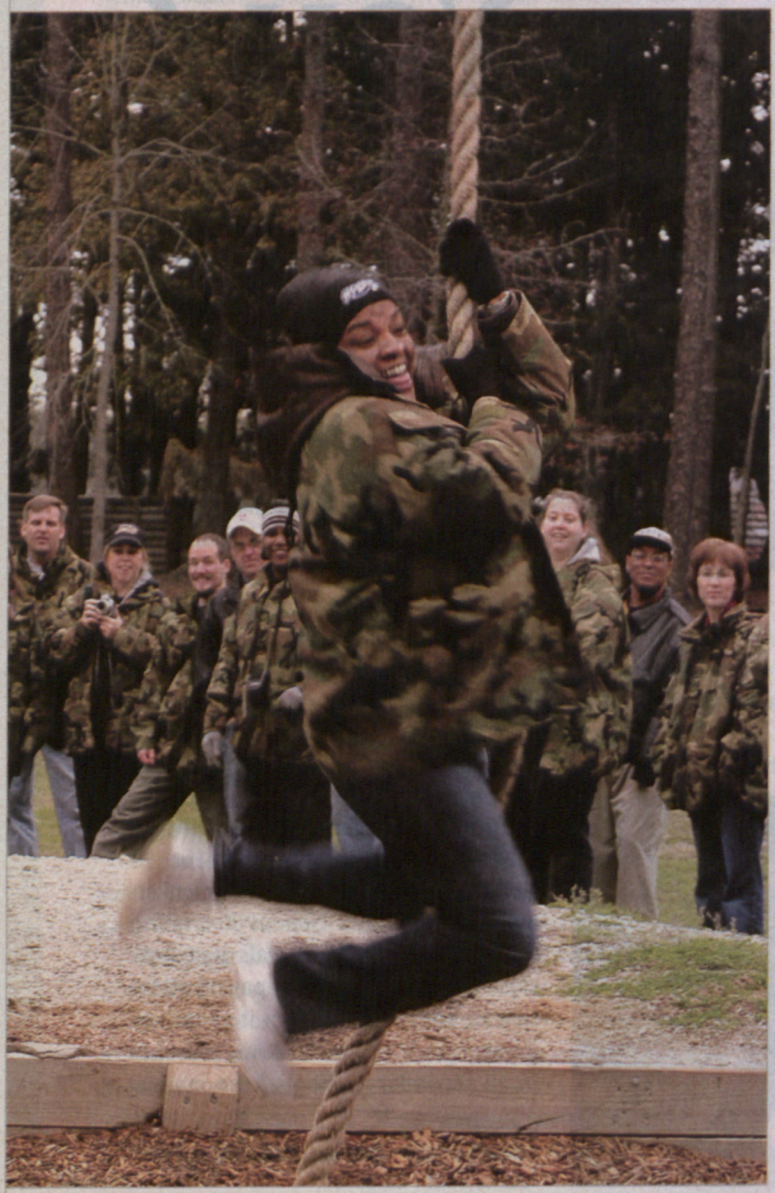
advises. "School ownership is the goal." How best to do that? "Be indispensable to school administration, counselors, faculty, and students. Be so helpful and so much a part of the school scene that you are in constant demand, so if anyone has any questions about the military service, they call you first!" (See "By the Book," page 37.)

Using teachers is "a very clever marketing technique," says Allen Kanner, a clinical psychologist and researcher whose work in part focuses on military recruiting. In the last few years the military hired private firms, including those that specialize in marketing to children, to learn how to best gain a stronghold in schools, Kanner says. "Teachers are role models, and if they approve of something, then the students believe the whole school system approves of it," he explains.

It's the same thing you'll hear from Curtis Gilroy, the head of recruitment for the Department of Defense. "Teachers are a significant influencer, there's no question about it," he says. "We just want the cadre of teachers, regardless of political persuasion or background, to speak about the military objectively."

So while you may worry that students are tuning you out in homeroom, the Army thinks otherwise. "Before you can expect any type of assistance from school officials or be accepted by students, you must first establish rapport and credibility," states the Army recruiting handbook. "You must convince [educators] that you have their students' best interests in mind."

That's exactly what the Marines are hoping to do as they put the 80 or so educators from Louisville, Kentucky, and Richmond, Virginia, through their paces at Parris Island. Each year, they bring 12 groups of educators through the all-expenses-paid workshop, at a cost of roughly $57,000 per visit. The Army, Navy, and Air Force host similar programs. "We're looking at those people on the fence, or more than likely, who are uninformed," says Parris Island spokesman Lt. Scott Miller. "We're just trying to inform them. Are we trying to win them? Yeah. We have a quota." If recruiters successfully target the teachers first, then they have, Miller says, "another foot in the door, so to speak."



IN TUCSON, ARIZONA, Rolande Baker had had enough of the feet in her and her colleagues' doors. The special education and government teacher successfully lobbied the Tucson Unified School District last year to severely curtail recruiters' access to schools.

Baker was initially rankled by an ever-burgeoning number of recruiters interrupting students' lunches, coming up to their tables, offering to buy them chips and nachos. After school, she'd see them handing out pencils and bumper stickers. Then the recruiters' attention turned to Baker and her colleagues.

"They would put slips of paper in our mailboxes that said, 'How would you like to have a day off from class? Let us come speak to your students,'" she says. "It would make me so angry, I would tear it up into little pieces."

During the first three weeks of the 2005 school year, recruiters visited her school 38 times, says Baker. During that same period, college recruiters visited three times. Ninety-one percent of students at Sunnyside High are Black or Hispanic, and she believes that made her and her colleagues a particularly attractive target.

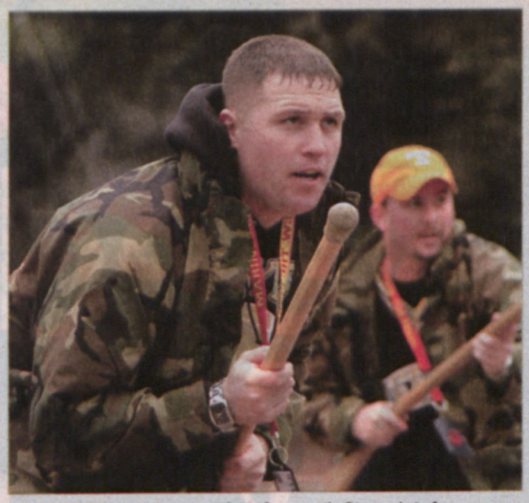
"It's very insidious," says Arlene Inouye, a speech and language specialist in Los Angeles schools and the coordinator of the Coalition Against Militarism in Our Schools. "It's become very clear that recruiters want to be an integral part of the school so that people will look at them and their position will not be questioned."

BECOMING AN INTEGRAL PART of the schools includes the Educator Workshops on Parris Island, where Bethany Deckard and her colleagues gather for the four-day, behind-the scenes look at recruits' experience there. Make that somewhat of a behind-the-scenes look.

While workshop participants settle into auditorium seats for a presentation by a gregarious colonel, who speaks about the Marines' focus on character development, discipline, esprit de corps, and military bearing, a drill instructor a half-mile away is screaming through the grey morning at a recruit. A recruit who, on her 21st day of training, finds herself paralyzed with fear atop

a wooden beam perched several feet above the ground. For nearly five minutes she wobbles, knees shaking, turning her stricken, damp face away as her drill instructor screams, "Your tears do nothing for me."

For most of the educators, the emotional high point of the trip comes when watching two companies ending their training receive the revered Marine Corps pin at an event called the emblem ceremony, and then the next morning, seeing their stirring graduation ceremony. Many teachers wipe tears from their eyes during both ceremonies. Proud "ooh-rahs"—a trademark Marine cry—come from at least five former Marines in their ranks.



Educators like **Anita Whitehurst** (left) and **John Hodge** (above) experience how Marine recruits train at the Educator Workshop on Parris Island.

"I know kids who would benefit from the discipline and learning about the honor and commitment," says Victor Smith, a math and special education teacher from Richmond. "Those who haven't been exposed don't understand." Like the rest of the group, he snaps photos throughout the visit and plans to incorporate the experience into his classroom work in the coming weeks. Assistant Principal Donna Buzonas of Newport News, Virginia, says she was "shocked" to see how young the recruits look, but "it makes me proud that they're instilling the right values in them," she says. "If [my] kids have questions, I'll be able to answer them."

IN MANY DISTRICTS, THE QUESTIONS now revolve around how and where recruiters can operate. In Baker's school district in Tucson, recruiters now can come on campus only once a month (federal law mandates they be allowed on campus at least twice in a school year). They meet only with students who request an appointment, and those meetings must take place in a designated area, not in the halls or classrooms. During annual registration, Tucson Unified distributes a card that lets parents opt in on having their child's contact information sent to the Department of Defense for recruiting purposes. The current No Child Left Behind provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act require that to get federal funding, schools must turn over that contact information unless parents opt out. Tucson's more restrictive opt-in approach is the same one that NEA advocates. In 2005, Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) introduced the Student Privacy Protection Act, which would amend NCLB to require an opt-in system.

Bethany Deckard wasn't lobbying to keep recruiters out of her school hallways, but she also wasn't likely to point students toward a recruiter. "Honestly, I was real leery and probably not encouraging it," Deckard, an English teacher, confides quietly aboard the bus on the first day of her Parris Island visit. "It's still hard for me. I was talking to one teacher here and she was saying, 'I'm excited for my kids,' and I'm thinking, 'They could die.'"

By the end of her stay at Parris Island, Deckard's opinion has evolved. As the bright marching tune of a brass band fills the hangar where graduation is about to begin, she reflects positively on her time on the island. "When I was watching the emblem ceremony yesterday, I just felt so proud to be a part of the United States," she says. At this, her voice wavers. "I'm so grateful for the sacrifices they make." nea

Send comments on this story to ckopkowski@nea.org.

By the Book

The U.S. Army's *School Recruiting Program Handbook* reveals that when it comes to reaching educators and students, little is left to chance. Some excerpts:

"Recruiters must first establish rapport in the schools....Once educators are convinced recruiters have their students' best interests in mind, the school recruiting program can be effectively implemented."

"Like the farmer who fails to guard the hen house, we can easily lose our schools and relinquish ownership to the other services if we fail to maintain a strong school recruiting program."

"Never rely on guidance counselors as the sole center of influence in the school. Cultivate coaches, librarians, administrative staff, and teachers, especially those whose subjects correlate with Army programs."

"Attend as many school activities as possible. Offer your Army training and experience, your sports and hobby knowledge, etc., as a resource to the school."

"Try to obtain a schedule of high school faculty meetings....A luncheon presentation of what the Army offers young people will enhance your relationship with the entire school faculty. Start with our shared goals for students of staying in school, off drugs, and out of trouble."

"Have something to give them (pen, calendar, cup, donuts, etc.) and always remember secretary's week with a card or flowers."

"Offer your assistance in registration and any other administrative help you can give. Remember: You need all the blueprint information on your high school you can get."

"Deliver donuts and coffee for the faculty once a month. This will help in scheduling classroom presentations and advise teachers of the many Army opportunities."

PHOTOS: PAULA WILLIAMSON

I Need My Space!

ABOUT ME:
My name is Laura.
I am sixteen.
I giggle all the time.
I am a Vegetarian.
I am shy when I first meet someone but I will open up.

ok well, i'm talking to this guy named jake right? and we were fixing to start dating and then i met someone else. that someone just happens to be jake's older brother. EEK! yeah well me and his bro, chris, have been talking for a while now and no one knows about it b/c it's really bad....

JUICY'S LIKES:

flip flops
make up
pink flowers
gum
nice bodies
shrimp
cell phones
nail salons
kissing

JUICY'S DISLIKES

nasty teeth
stuck up people
gossip
mushrooms
diet coke
spiders
feet
shallowness
embarrassing moments
gothics
bad smells

MUSIC: Love Trance, Techno...listen to Rap too...whatever's playing on the radio... not really rock...and hate country and tejano...love opera...piano...i guess i like thinking to music because the music i listen to is complicated with all the sounds....

BY CINDY LONG

When Caitlyn McNeill started high school last year, she wished she could take all of her middle school friends with her. Unfortunately, only half of the 16-year-old's friends joined her at Northern High in Owings, Maryland, while the other half went to school in the neighboring town. They still manage to keep in close touch, chatting almost as often as they did when they walked the halls and ate lunch together. The only difference is that now they hang out on MySpace.com, the Web site that has become the 21st century's answer to the 1950s soda shop.

Caitlyn and her friends log on to MySpace to catch up with each other, post bulletins about what's new, and chat about friends, school, weekend plans, and, of course, boys. They decorate their MySpace pages the way they might decorate their bedrooms, complete with colorful, patterned backgrounds and photos; Caitlyn's page is greenish-blue with a star pattern. "It's bright and really cute," she says. Along with posting pictures of themselves and their friends, they link to videos and MP3 files. "My friend has a video from the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, where Will and Carlton are doing a dance," says Caitlyn. "It's hilarious."

It's all part of the social networking revolution, in which users build personal pages and use those pages to share information, chat online, and keep in touch with others. Hundreds of such sites exist, but MySpace leads the way. It's the third

ILLUSTRATION: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.; ICON ILLUSTRATIONS: JAKUB CEJPEK

most visited Web site in the United States (behind Yahoo! and Google), averaging 36 million page views a day. Of the millions, many are students. Right now, more than half of American kids online use social networking sites, according to a Pew Internet & American Life Project survey of teenagers.

Making connections is what powers the popularity of sites like MySpace, but it can also be cause for concern. News stories abound of online predators stalking young girls and boys by way of their profiles and luring teens, even preteens, into dangerous situations. Some kids post photographs of themselves in less-than-virtuous poses, in barely-there outfits—or worse, in incriminating situations—for all the world to see, including college admissions officers and potential employers. Students have also posted nasty comments about their classmates and teachers. In fact, more than one in three educators surveyed by the National School Boards Association (NSBA)—some 36 percent—said social networking sites have been disruptive at school.

But tell students about the concerns surrounding sites like MySpace, and the common refrain is one adults have been hearing from teenagers since the Stone Age: "You worry too much!" As media-savvy technophiles, they realize some of their peers misuse the Web, but they're asking us to trust that most of them use it safely and responsibly. What's more, research backs up their claims. Most students take steps to protect their privacy, and in some schools, safety and social networking have become part of the curriculum. "Simply blocking access to MySpace at school is not the end of the story," said NSBA Executive Director Anne Bryant. "Students need to be educated about these sites and what the impact of misuse is on themselves as well as others."

Teens everywhere are connecting on MySpace, but is it a safe space?

Kathy Schrock, who helps educate students on technology issues in Nauset Public Schools on Cape Cod, comes at the problems of social networking with firsthand experience. For an entire year, she had an "imposter page," or fake profile, posted about her on MySpace by five students at a Catholic high school.

"The page they created for me was basically harmless, but it wasn't authentic and I wanted it taken down," says Schrock, the district's administrator for technology, whose "Guide for Educators" is found at www.discoveryschool.com. "I had to call the teacher, who didn't even know about MySpace. I wrote to the school, but the principal wouldn't take care of it. MySpace wouldn't even take it down."

That was a year ago. The bogus page has since come down, and MySpace is now quick to remove imposter pages. In fact, its frequently asked questions include, "How do we remove an imposter profile for a teacher/faculty member" and "Someone is pretending to be me—what do I do?"

While high-profile cases involving teenagers creating imposter pages for teachers and classmates have surfaced (see "Savaged in Cyberspace," page 23, for examples), Schrock is more concerned about students' safety. Her message to students is simple: if you have a profile, keep it private.

MySpace requires users to be at least 14, and profiles of MySpace users under 16 are automatically set to "private," so only the users they've allowed access can view their profile, send instant messages and e-mails, or add them to their blog list. But kids routinely lie about their ages—either that, or there are a surprising number of high school freshmen and sophomores age 20 or above on MySpace.

Last June, MySpace announced that privacy options would be available to users of all ages and that all users could block others from contacting them, conceal their "online now" status, and prevent others from e-mailing direct links to their images. MySpace users 18 or older can no longer add users under 16 to their friends list unless they already know the person's full name or e-mail address.

The new privacy options were announced after a 16-year-old girl tricked her parents into getting her a passport and then flew to the Mideast to be with a man she met on the site. It's one of the most extreme stories—of which there are only a smattering, considering the tens of millions of young people

INTERESTS: I like art, music, movies, psychology, and martial arts. I like to hang out with my friends and play video games or whatever. I'm also kind of interested in politics. I'm not a fanatic about it, but I do like to pay attention to what's going on in the world. I'm not religious, but I do find it interesting. I like to argue about religion.... I'm open-minded about it, too. I think that not everyone believes the same thing, and that's okay as long as you don't try to force others to think your way....

YOUR HERITAGE: African American
THE SHOES YOU WORE TODAY: Jordans
YOUR WEAKNESS: sexy females
PEPSI OR COKE: coke
MCDONALD'S OR BURGER KING: both
SINGLE OR GROUP DATES: single
CHOCOLATE OR VANILLA? vanilla
DO YOU SMOKE?: no
DO YOU SWEAR? yes
DO YOU SING? when needed
DO YOU BELIEVE IN YOURSELF? yes

who visit the site regularly.

How often is regularly? "I go on MySpace every chance I get," Caitlyn McNeill says. She's not alone. According to the Pew study, 48 percent of teens visit social networking sites at least once every day.

Most of Caitlyn's MySpace habits align closely with the Pew findings, which show that young people are wise to the dangers posed by social networking sites. Caitlyn and her friends set their profiles to private; Pew found that 66 percent of teens have done the same. Caitlyn uses MySpace to keep in touch with her friends from school and to make plans; Pew found that 91 percent of teens use social networking sites to keep in touch with friends they see a lot, while 72 percent use the site to make plans with those friends. In fact, the tagline of the MySpace site is, "A place for friends."

Caitlyn is also a fairly savvy Internet user. "There are a lot of creeps out there, and I know it," she says. "I don't let anybody add me to their friends list, and I don't accept messages from anybody I haven't met in person. Also, if your profile is set to private, the people at school you don't like can't find out information about you."

Sarah Mortimer, who lives in New Hampshire, uses MySpace to keep in touch with friends both near and far. "Since I have switched schools a lot, I am able to keep in touch with kids from my old schools," the 16-year-old says. "It's just really nice to see someone I haven't talked to in, like, 10 years and remember them from my childhood." She has her profile set to private so "rapist killers don't get me," she says half-jokingly. But her profile also says she lives in Zimbabwe so that anyone searching in her town or ZIP code won't find her.

"There are a lot of creeps out there, and I know it," says **Caitlyn McNeill,** who keeps her MySpace page set to private.

That's exactly the kind of Internet shrewdness Kim Conner, the computer teacher at Nauset Middle School, is trying to instill among her sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders. "One student put up Albert Einstein as his profile photo to help hide his identity," Conner says. "I thought that was rather clever."

Conner has worked social networking safety into the curriculum as a way to "make the kids aware of the different things that can happen when they use the sites without thinking," she says.

As is the case in most districts, Conner and her students can't access MySpace or other social networking sites at school, but she's saved screen shots that she uses to demonstrate how profiles that aren't set to private can reveal identifying details. For example, when kids allow their profiles and instant messages to be open, anyone can read plans they might make online. She uses the following as an example:

NAUSETGIRL (5:09:55): wotz ^? wnt 2 go out?
WARRIOR08 (5:09:56): yS, whr do wnt 2 go?
NAUSETGIRL (5:09:57): How bout the chocl@ Sparrow n Orleans?

Suddenly, anyone logged onto the page can see where the girls are meeting.

Conner also uses an example of a profile of a girl who thought she hadn't posted anything identifiable, except for a photo gallery image of her wearing her school's field hockey uniform.

But once students are aware of the dangers and are taught to think carefully about how they use sites like MySpace, Conner believes that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. "It's really a great way for kids to stay connected outside of school," she says, adding that sometimes students get online and help each other with homework or work on assignments together. But the main benefit of sites like MySpace is that they "allow young people to express themselves, be creative, and show their friends who they really are," says Conner. "It gives them a common venue."

Chris Luty, a senior at Kennedy High School in Silver Spring, Maryland, expresses himself on his MySpace profile with photos, videos, music files, and different fonts and backgrounds. Parents and teachers beware—what kids like Chris might find appealing about their profiles would probably cross the eyes of most adults. On many teen profiles, backgrounds are a blur of vibrant colors, patterns, and clashing, often unreadable fonts, splattered with links and images. But their friends can tell a lot about their sense of humor by the videos they post, or about their musical tastes by the bands they promote.

Chris's profile includes an Adam Sandler video and videos of live performances by three of his favorite bands—Godsmack, +44, and Patent Pending. He says that all of his friends on MySpace are people he knows in "real life." Otherwise, he says, "I'd have no idea who was sitting behind that keyboard."

Kim Conner acknowledges that there have been problems with abuses of MySpace, but she says she approaches it with "the one bad apple doesn't spoil the whole bushel theory."

"Some really good things can come out of this," Conner says. "It gives all students a way to connect and be together in a safe environment. MySpace can be a very safe and positive thing." nea

FOR MORE ON MYSPACE visit **www.nea.org/ref?3444** to find a novice's introduction to the site, along with a Q&A with teenagers Caitlyn McNeill and Chris Luty about student misuse of MySpace.

PHOTO: CHARLES VOTAW

A Lesson in Miracles

To Holocaust survivor Henri Landwirth, the gift of life is a miracle—and a mission.

Fifty-two years ago, 18-year-old Henri Landwirth was the walking dead on the way to his execution. Today, "I'm walking history," says the 80-year-old Holocaust survivor. Landwirth was given a miraculous reprieve when the Nazi soldiers who were about to shoot him had a change of heart and told him to run for his life instead.

Landwirth's remarkable life journey ultimately led him from heart-wrenching deprivation in Germany's death camps to undreamed-of success as a hotelier in America. Convinced he was living on borrowed time, he walked out of his multimillion-dollar business one day and never came back—dedicating the rest of his life to creating and funding charitable foundations for those in need, particularly children.

The award-winning philanthropist recently spoke with NEA Today's *Sabrina Holcomb about his most recent project, Gift of Life in America, aimed at helping young people understand the ultimate consequence of hate and prejudice "before it's too late."*

Henri Landwirth shows students his Auschwitz tattoo.

Why do you have such a sense of urgency about this project?

LANDWIRTH: I'm one of the youngest of the Holocaust survivors. In a couple of years, we will all be gone, and none of us will be able to tell the history firsthand. Eleven million people were killed by Hitler, and some people, including children, do not believe it happened. There's a 30 percent increase in groups like the Ku Klux Klan. We cannot forget the atrocities that took place in WWII Europe and that are still taking place all over the world—Africa, the Middle East. It's happening right now.

What is Gift of Life in America?

LANDWIRTH: It's an educational program that challenges young people to eliminate hate and prejudice from their lives. Every week, I visit schools and speak to students about the Holocaust. We also have multimedia teaching tools: a CD showing my grandchildren interviewing me about my life in the concentration camps, a teacher's guide with discussion questions and activities, and a Web site where young people can talk with each other.

This April, in honor of Holocaust Month, we're partnering with PBS and Florida Community College in Jacksonville to do ten 40-minute broadcasts to middle school, high school, and college students throughout the state. A group of students who call themselves HYPE (Helping You Pursue Equality) will introduce me and urge their peers to take a pledge to pursue equality in all their daily interactions. Once students pledge, their names are added to our Web site (www.hatehurts.org).

Why did you decide to talk to school kids and educators, rather than politicians?

LANDWIRTH: I was in the concentration camps from 13 to 18, the same age as the young people I'm talking to now. They are the ones capable of breaking the hate cycle. Last year, a teacher [NEA member Bettina Hodges] asked me if I would speak with the students at her high school when racial tensions erupted. A 15-year-old boy ended up committing suicide, and the students were all blaming each other.

Bettina Hodges says some students were using racial slurs, mocking slavery, and wearing T-shirts that said, "Your grandmother picked the cotton that made this shirt!" How do you get through to kids like that?

LANDWIRTH: I show them my Auschwitz tattoo. In the camps, I had no name. I was just a number, B4343. I show them the bump on my head where I was bashed by a Nazi soldier and left for dead. I tell them how my father and mother were murdered. I describe my skeletal body, covered with gangrenous sores and suffering from typhus. Then I talk to them about forgiveness. I tell them how sick I was because of my hatred. But one day, I just forgave the Germans; otherwise, I couldn't have had a normal life. My twin sister [who was also in the camps] asks me how I can forgive them. Maybe because of the two soldiers who saved my life. If not for them, I wouldn't be alive.

Ms. Hodges says you made a tremendous impact on the students and that things calmed down after your visit. What do you think made your message so powerful?

LANDWIRTH: When you forgive, you start feeling like a different person. If you don't forgive, you cannot love. A lot of miracles happen to us every single day without us realizing it, and my life is one of them.

FOR MORE about Landwirth and his work, visit www.nea.org/ref?3442.

PHOTO: WALTER COKER/FOLIO WEEKLY

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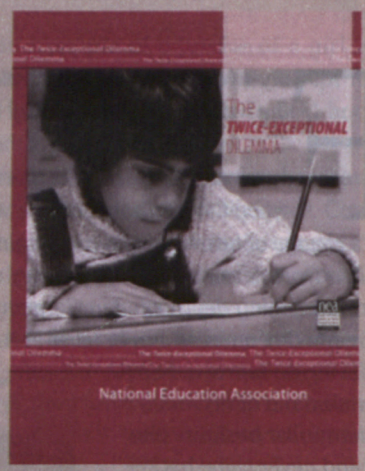

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Great Public Schools for Every Child

Should students be suspended for inappropriate dress?

YES I am a strong supporter of the freedom of expression, and am strongly opposed to school uniforms. However, I feel that students who dress inappropriately after knowing the dress code should be suspended.

Typically, students purposely violate the dress code to elicit a response from their peers or from others in the school community. I've seen students arrive at school wearing revealing clothing; T-shirts promoting sexual behavior, alcohol, and drug use; or clothing designed to offend different social groups. A student once walked into school wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with a swastika. He was told to go home to find another shirt, and that refusing to do so would be insubordination, resulting in suspension. Does anyone really think that he wore that shirt because it was the only clean one that he had at home?

By failing to act decisively, we are sending the message that we don't care about proper behavior, which includes proper dress. It can lead to other, more serious behavior issues as well. Students need to learn self-control and personal responsibility, and a dress code, including the power to suspend students for violating it, can help do that.

PERNELL COLLETT teaches social studies and public speaking at Ledford High School in Thomasville, North Carolina, and is president of the Davidson County Association of Educators.

NO Although teens everywhere want to wear the latest fashions and believe their dress styles should be acceptable anywhere, it is universally accepted that schools have an appropriate dress code that must be maintained. However, we need to consider carefully the manner in which we discipline students who break that code. Suspending students for dress code violations is an ineffective punishment that accomplishes nothing except disrupting student learning.

A better approach would be to seek parental or guardian involvement. If the student is allowed to leave home inappropriately dressed, why not involve the parent and have them bring appropriate clothing to school? Parents and guardians need to be held accountable for student dress code violations. Many parents leave the house before their children, but a phone call from the school asking them to bring in appropriate clothing will certainly give parents a good reason to pay attention to their child's wardrobe decisions and to talk about what is acceptable attire for school.

Suspension should be a last resort, coming only after other interventions have failed. After all, one of the major goals of any educational system is attendance. We want to keep students in school, not out.

LETICIA COLIN, a future parent of a teenage daughter, teaches AIMS language arts at Carl Hayden Community High School in Phoenix, Arizona.

OTHER VOICES

Here's what other educators are saying on our message boards. Join the debate by visiting www.nea.org/debate.

INAPPROPRIATE DRESS DOES not represent any physical harm to other students and does not warrant suspension… The offending garment should be taken from the student…and an ugly substitute provided. I read about one principal who had black T-shirts printed with "Mr. [principal's name] rocks." He would issue these shirts to students to replace inappropriate shirts.

ONE WAY WE CAN respect ourselves and others at the same time is by dressing appropriately at school. When someone dresses inappropriately, it is distractive and interrupts the learning process.…Isn't it fair for the person breaking the rule to have his or her schooling interrupted by being suspended?

TODAY'S TEACHERS ARE required not only to teach the curriculum, but to teach social skills [that] used to be the parents' responsibility. Perhaps if students were suspended because of their clothing choices, parents would wake up and accept their responsibility to teach their children the appropriate way to dress in public.

WE GO TO THE Salvation Army or Goodwill before the start of the school year, and all of the teachers pool their money and we buy a couple of hundred dollars' worth of old clothes. When students come to school dressed out of dress code, we make them wear some old button-up shirt or plaid pants. Believe me, they are too embarrassed to try to elude the dress code again!

TELL US ABOUT IT

Who was your favorite teacher when you were in school? Share your thoughts on our Forums page—www.nea.org/forum—or e-mail your story to clong@nea.org.

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

SIGN OF THE TIMES

Billboards created by students for a Read Across America contest, sponsored by the Delaware State Education Association, greeted drivers across Delaware at the start of the school year. The grand prize-winning road sign was designed by third- and fourth-graders under the direction of art teacher Pamela Whitaker.

LIGHTEN UP

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT IT

For my Spanish II class travel project this year, students had to research whether they needed a passport or visa to travel to the country they chose. One student told me he just wrote "yes" for passport and "no" for visa, without checking. When I asked him why, he said he knew he needed a passport but he didn't need a "Visa" because he was planning to use only cash!

KAREN WILSON
High school teacher, Plainville, Kansas

ANIMAL KINGDOM

After reading *The Giant Jam Sandwich* to a kindergarten class, we counted the legs on various plastic bugs and a plastic spider. When one bright boy pointed to the bugs and said, "Those are insects, but I don't know what that other one is" (referring to the spider), a little girl confidently answered, "an octopus."

LOANNA HUDGINS
Elementary librarian, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

HEAVY NOUNS

I was teaching middle school English and had been stressing the different kinds of nouns: common, proper, collective, concrete, abstract, etc. When I asked, "Who remembers the types of nouns we discussed yesterday," an eager student answered, "Common, proper, abstract, collective, and cement!"

SUZANNE DENT
High school teacher
Birmingham, Alabama

Computer Stoplights

To end computer lab chaos, use a set of red, green, and yellow paper cups as stoplights for each computer station. If students are doing well, they keep the green cup on the top of the stack. If they are stuck but can work on something else until you get to them, they move the yellow cup to the top. Finally, if they are at a complete standstill and must have help before they can move on, they display the red cup. It's a great way to cut down on lost time as they wave their hands, and I can see at a glance how they are doing. I also use this strategy during tests.

KERIN STEIGERWALT
Seventh-grade teacher
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Lifelong Reading

To help encourage lifelong reading, I post a copy of the local newspaper on the hallway wall outside my room. Students stop by during the day to check out the news headlines, comics, and sports page. The students in the Stock Market Game Competition often check the business section. My goal is to get the kids hooked on reading the newspaper on a daily basis.

D. DON SCHULTE
High school social studies teacher, Maryland Heights, Missouri

BILLBOARD: COURTESY OF PAMELA WHITAKER; SPIDER: ©ELECTICSODA; CONCRETE: ©ALBERT BARR; STOPLIGHT: ©ANDRES RODRIGUEZ

CLASS ACT

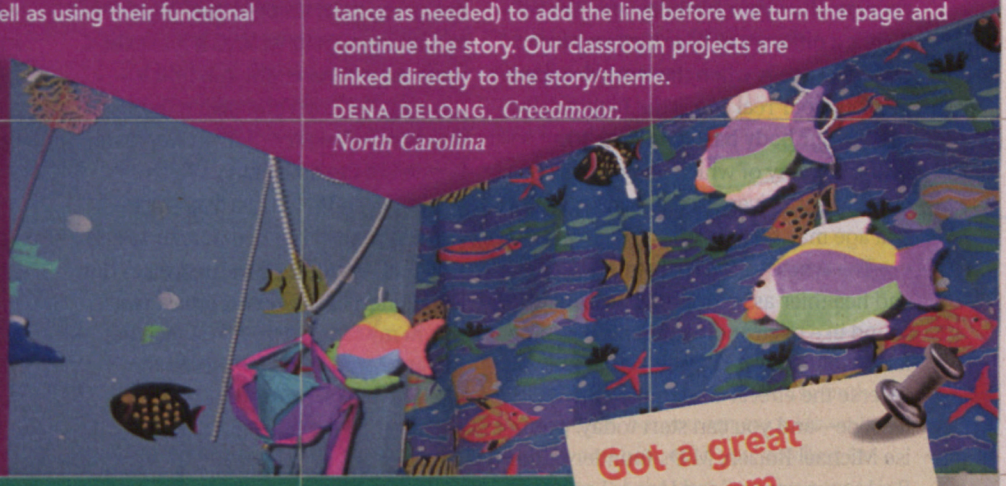
I teach K–7 children with severe and multiple disabilities (although preK–5 general ed students often visit my class as well). Quality and enjoyment of life is at the core of my class each day, and over the years, I've come up with some creative ways to help my students gain the knowledge, skills, and independence they need to get the most from life.

NAVIGATIONAL BULLETIN BOARD. Several of my students with visual impairments have only light perception, so I've designed the bulletin board as a visual cue to help them find the class during transitions. I put up aluminum foil to cover the board, which is located across from a big window. When the sun is shining, the reflection gives a great visual "reminder" of where our class is. This helps my kids work on basic orientation and mobility skills, as well as using their functional vision to maximum capacity.

SENSORY ROOM. Our classroom bathroom is a stimulation room as well as a functional area. The entire bathroom is like being underwater, with a fish-motif shower curtain on one wall and a glow-in-the-dark sea-life scene I painted on another wall. Hanging off the ceiling are Christmas lights (which can be set to on/off or variable speed blink mode) and a variety of sea-themed stuffed and blow-up creatures. We also have a black light and an ocean wave sound machine.

LITERACY LINK. I read to my students every day. Since many of them are non-verbal, we use pre-recorded communication devices to allow for maximum participation. If a book does not have a repeated line in it, we make one up. The students then hit the communication device (with assistance as needed) to add the line before we turn the page and continue the story. Our classroom projects are linked directly to the story/theme.

DENA DELONG, *Creedmoor, North Carolina*



Classroom Presentations

My teammate and I include "Audience Behavior" on every rubric or project score sheet. This requirement has helped improve behavior a lot! Students know being disrespectful or poor listeners will affect their own presenting score. We have been able to extend this concept easily to school assemblies and other situations. Students know I am watching in those settings as well.

MARY ANN BARNES
Fifth-grade teacher
Richmond, Vermont

off the mark.com
by Mark Parisi
YOUR TERM PAPER ON "THE GROWING PROBLEM OF PLAGIARISM IN SOCIETY" IS EYE-OPENING...ESPECIALLY SINCE IT'S THE THIRD TIME I'VE SEEN IT...

Got a great classroom bulletin board, cool project, or creative lesson?

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What's Your Real Age?

Are you younger or older than the person in the mirror?

BY SHEREE CRUTE

What if you could turn back the hands of time and actually become younger? That's right. Even if you chow down on junk food and work out by clicking the remote, you can start creating changes that will make your biological age younger than your birthday age. Yes, there's a difference! Your birthday (or calendar) age is when the stork dropped you, but your real age is the biological age of your body based on over 100 factors—many of which you control. So even if your driver's license says 45, your real age may be 38.

The whole idea of becoming younger and healthier as the months pass may sound like hocus pocus, but it's based on facts, not fantasy. You can actually reverse the effects of an unhealthy lifestyle—and you can start today, promise Michael Roizen, M.D., founder of the RealAge program, and Henry Lodge, M.D., co-author of the book series *Younger Next Year: Turn Back Your Biological Clock*. As a matter of fact, you may already be increasing your longevity without even knowing it, like NEA members Linda Welch and Timm Pilcher.

Here's how it works. The RealAge database includes information from 1,200 highly credible studies culled from more than 100,000 pieces of scientific research. Each study has been analyzed to calculate the effect of hundreds of factors on disease, the aging process, and longevity. The RealAge test (available for free at www.realage.com) tells you how old you really are (biologically speaking) according to the health risks you manage, ignore, or perhaps don't even know about. It then gives you a unique set of recommendations to help you start your RealAge makeover—a chance to realistically add years to your life.

Welch, for example, took the test and was delighted to discover she is 3.6 years younger than her calendar age of 47. An education support professional at Neligh/Oakdale elementary school in Nebraska, Welch was rewarded for getting regular exercise and eating lots of fruits, vegetables, yogurt, and grains. "My mom died of colon cancer at my age," says the single mom of two. "I was not going to let that get me." In addition to walking regularly, Welch looks for a workout wherever she can find it, mowing her lawn and taking flights of stairs to do laundry. "I'm active—I stay busy all of the time," says Welch.

But even Welch discovered new ways to protect her health after taking her Real Age quiz. "I learned that I don't eat enough fish, I have a breast cancer risk in my family I have to watch out for, and I must stop talking on the phone while driving."

Pilcher, a journalism teacher at Hoover High School in Des Moines, Iowa, managed to test an amazing 6.5 years younger than his 46 years, even with his genetically high cholesterol (he sticks with his medication). Exercise put him over the top. "'The family that kicks together, stays together' is our family motto," Pilcher says, referring to the four tae kwan do classes he takes each week with his wife and two sons. He also rollerblades in the summer and occasionally bikes but says, "I still love McDonald's, but I'm in much better shape now than I was when I smoked."

Pilcher also scored extra points for his attitude. "I try to live in the moment, rather than worrying about the future," he says. "I don't let a lot of things stress me out."

PHOTO COLLAGE: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.—BATHROOM MIRROR PHOTO: MARK E. STOUT; FATHER AND SON PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER ROBBINS

Get Younger Every Day

Both Welch and Pilcher are living proof that you can live "young" even when you're juggling a heavy workload or raising a family. In other words, if they can do it, so can you. Here's how:

BUILD ON THE BASICS

Movement matters. First and most important, if you really want to live long and strong, exercise is not optional—it's a must, Lodge advises. "Exercise cleans the chemistry of stress out of the body and prevents the frailty we associate with old age." But most important, Lodge says, exercise switches on the body's production of cytokine-6 (c-6) and cytokine-10 (c-10). The body produces c-6, the source of the inflammation that damages the heart, blood vessels, joints, and brain, no matter what you do, and the amount increases with a sedentary lifestyle. The only way to repair the damage caused by c-6 is to encourage the body to produce a constant supply of c-10. And the only way to produce c-10 is—you guessed it—aerobic exercise. "Six days a week is ideal, according to the research," says Lodge. "Four days of aerobic workouts, at least 30 minutes, and two days of light weights for strength. Four is better than nothing, but the research shows that six, for life, is the answer." Use your school to make it easier. Run or walk the track, work out in the gym, or take the stairs.

Forget dieting. Lodge suggests you get an idea of your resting metabolic rate (RMR)—that would be the calories you need to just exist—and eat near that level, while working out on a regular basis. You can get tested at many local gyms; log onto www.newleaffitness.com to find a location near you. For most active folks, eating properly means consuming about 2,000 calories each day of grains, fruit, vegetables, protein, and dairy products. Cut down on saturated fat, sweets, alcohol, and processed food—more so as you age.

TRIM OFF A FEW YEARS

Enjoy the educator's bonus. "Our research shows that people who have jobs with a purpose, jobs that make a difference and that they love have the longest life expectancy of all of the professions. That group includes teachers," Roizen says.

"Remembering why you're teaching and that you are in the most valuable profession there is can protect you from major life stresses. This type of stress, according to RealAge research, can make you more than 30 years older," Roizen warns. So embrace the value of working with kids. The next time your class is driving you crazy, "remember that we're all influenced by teachers. They make a difference in every life," he says.

Take control of your classroom. Poor classroom air quality is a major health issue in many schools. "Putting a HEPA air filter in your classroom is a worthy investment," Roizen says. "Enjoying the best air quality can make you nearly six years younger." (For more on air quality, visit www.nea.org/ref?3434.)

Do a little homework of your own. Never put down your books. Continuing to learn throughout life can make you two-and-a-half years younger. Getting lots of vitamin B12 and B9 (eat salmon and beans) helps protect mind and memory and makes you one-and-a-half years younger.

Laugh with your kids. Kids can be hilarious, so enjoy their antics whenever you can. Laughing often can make you eight years younger because it relaxes your blood vessels—the exact opposite effect of stress.

Protect your hardworking peepers. Eye strain goes with reading, writing, and arithmetic, so get plenty of vitamins C, E, beta carotene, and zinc. The antioxidants that protect eye health can make you up to six years younger. Mangoes, nuts, and peanut butter are great sources.

Find yourself somebody to love. Get close to your family, friends, or significant other. Forming long-term relationships based on love can add six years to your life. No matter your age, having at least one friend makes your cardiovascular system younger and healthier and fights inflammation and stress.

So that's it. Living young is not magic. It's common sense, backed up by a little elbow grease and willpower. You can't smooth every wrinkle, but you can enjoy life well into your 80s and beyond, if you're willing to give it a try. So the next time someone asks you your age, you may be able to shave off a few years with perfect honesty! nea

Linda Welch, School Secretary

Calendar age: 47
RealAge: 43.4
Difference: –3.6 years

- Single mom of two
- Exercises regularly
- Eats lots of fruits, vegetables, yogurt, and grains
- Family history of cancer
- Has two jobs

Timm Pilcher, Journalism Teacher

Calendar age: 46
RealAge: 39.5
Difference: –6.5 years

- Married father of two
- Takes four tae kwan do classes each week with his family
- Quit smoking
- Takes medication for high cholesterol

WEIGHTS: BLUESTOCKING; FOOD COLLAGE: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.—SALAD: GARY COOKSON, MILK: NORMAN CHAN, NUTS: LURII KONOVAL, PEACH: EDYTA PAWLOWSKA; BOOKS: EDINA CEGLEDI

Home on the Range

It's up hills and into caves—all while wearing a famous hat—for this Utah teacher.

EVERY SUMMER, Jody Kyburz used to hike through Utah's Timpanogos Cave National Monument just for fun. But in the summer of 2001, the elementary school science teacher had an idea. "On my way down it suddenly hit me—maybe I should volunteer here," she recalls. "So I did."

The National Park Service assigned her to trail patrol, where she helped visitors and occasionally accompanied rangers on tours. She enjoyed volunteering so much that she applied to become a ranger. Since getting the job, she's worked every summer since 2003, interpreting the cave for people "so that they can make sense of what they're seeing."

Last summer Kyburz took her fifth-grade students on a hike to the cave, a field trip she plans on repeating. "It's one thing to show them videos and make them read articles about erosion or faults," she says. "But when they actually see it and go 'Oh, that's what a fault is,' that's when they really get it."

Students are also impressed to see her as a ranger, Kyburz says. "I think that rangers make excellent role models for children and more importantly, I think it opens their eyes to the fact that women can be rangers, too." What else impresses them? "My uniform, the badge, and the Smokey the Bear hat."

—MISHRI SOMESHWAR

Crafty Guy

This Connecticut educator sometimes floats through life, to his and his students' delight.

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER JIM BENINI has building hovercrafts down to a science. He and his principles of technology students at Parish Hill High School have built six working hovercrafts. Benini's inspiration for the unique hobby-meets-lesson plan came from a 1990s issue of *Popular Mechanics*. The craft and instructions in the magazine were too complicated, but "I never forgot about it," he says.

After a friend bought a hovercraft and gave him a lift in 2001, Benini knew it was time to try building one. The ride is "initially, a lot like flying a bar of soap over a frozen lake," he says. "Your first time out is usually scary for the first minute or so, then you start to get a feel for how the craft handles. A few minutes after that you start to have so much fun you don't want to head back to shore." He says his students agree. "After their first ride, they also can't wait to get back in and go again."

The craft flies about six inches high, at up to 28 miles per hour. But the vehicles aren't cheap or easy to build. Each hovercraft costs around $1,000 and construction typically takes 10 or 11 weeks, with more tinkering to follow. Last June, Benini and his students raced in the National Hoverally on Ohio's Scioto River. "We plan to do the same this year," he says.

—NADINE SIMPSON

PHOTO TOP: STEVE WILSON, PHOTO BOTTOM: JONATHAN OLSON

Your 2006-2007 Dues Dollar
>JODY KYBURZ >JIM BENINI >JANENE CAMPBELL > JERRY DIXON

Class Size Reduction

A Mississippi teacher goes from unhealthy to cover model.

WHEN JANENE CAMPBELL makes a resolution, she sticks with it. The teacher at Southwest Career and Technology Center in Memphis has the January 8 *People* magazine cover to prove it. Campbell was featured in the issue for her extraordinary achievement—losing more than 200 pounds since 2004. She now weighs 159 pounds—just nine away from her goal.

Janene Campbell before her weight loss.

After her father died of heart failure at 62, the 371-pound Campbell knew she had to change her eating habits. In December 2004, she joined a national weight loss program and crafted a nutrition plan. Anything loaded with sugar—her weakness—was out, replaced by healthy meals and snacks.

Starting during the holiday was tough, but the break let her strategize how she would deal with job-related obstacles like the long hours and prevalence of snacks and vending machines. She began chasing her children around for exercise. "I feel better, my confidence is better," says Campbell. "I can match my students' energy."

Even before the *People* cover, fellow staff and students sought her input in their own weight struggles. "I use my experience to teach students to work hard to reach their goals."

Extreme Educator

From building a school to competing in ultra-marathons, this Alaska retiree isn't slowing down any time soon.

AFTER SERVING in two noble professions—firefighting and teaching—what do you do in retirement? Jerry Dixon, a former smokejumper who parachuted in to fight forest fires and a teacher of gifted students in Alaska, learned about a village in Afghanistan named Kak Ear Tak Jar. The Taliban had forced village residents to flee, and when they returned, there was no school to educate the village's 150 children. Dixon decided to help build one, a mission that began by fundraising $18,000 and ended with the school's November 2004 completion. "The school was built using local labor and materials, so the dollars went a much longer way," Dixon, of NEA-Alaska/Retired, says.

The school is one of many projects that Dixon is working on. He has established 10 other endowments, including a philosophy lecturer position at his alma mater, the University of Utah. "I get a good idea, put up some money, and get some really smart people to put money in as well," he says.

He's also pursuing his passion for sports, ranging from skiing to ultra-marathons—races longer than 26 miles, frequently over harsh terrain. In 2004, he was the first person in 85 years to go from Seward, Alaska, to Yukon, Canada, in an ultra-marathon.

Dixon has no intention of slowing down. "I just keep living my dreams," he says. "That keeps me going."

—MISHRI SOMESHWAR

PEOPLE POLL

What nature adventure would you take if money were no object?

Great Barrier Reef dive—32%
Scandanavian fjords cruise—31%
African safari trek —25%
South American volcano hike—6%
Gobi Desert camel ride—6%

Head to www.nea.org/ref?3438 to cast your vote in May's Poll:

Superheroes are all the rage these days. What superpower would you love to have?

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story tip? Contact Cynthia Kopkowski at **ckopkowski@nea.org**.

PHOTO TOP RIGHT: CHUCK KENNEDY PHOTOGRAPHY; PHOTO BOTTOM: JERRY DIXON

A report from NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen

Lily Eskelsen

As NEA Secretary-Treasurer, I am pleased to report to you figures taken from NEA's audited financial statements for the fiscal and membership year ended August 31, 2006. Once again NEA experienced a positive year in 2005–06.

Our membership increased by an additional 37,419* members this year, and our General Operating Fund Unrestricted Net Assets increased by $2,201,117 as a result of net revenues exceeding expenses (Consolidated Net Assets increased by $7,652,848). The increase of Net Assets and continuous growth of new members add strength to our already fiscally sound organization that will enable us to help make public schools great for every child and to advocate for our members' needs.

Each of you should be proud of your contribution in making the NEA strong and responsive to the students we serve and the people who spend their lives in public education. The auditors' opinion letter stated that their work was performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. It is a "clean opinion" issued without any qualifying comments. An unqualified opinion is the best kind of opinion letter to receive.

The Consolidated Statements of Financial Position by Fund presents the Association's assets, liabilities, and net assets as of August 31, 2006. One important indicator of an organization's financial strength is the Net Assets (the difference between total assets and total liabilities). Net Assets should be a positive balance and sufficient not only to stabilize an organization in troubled times, but also to serve as a source of funds for special projects, future growth, and other fiscal demands as deemed appropriate. NEA's consolidated Net Asset Balance is now over $113.8 million. In addition, NEA has continuously demonstrated a positive Current Ratio, which means that NEA is in a solid position to meet its current obligations by using cash and other current assets.

The General Operating Fund Supplemental Statement of Activity and Changes in Net Assets reflects Total Revenues and Expenses by Strategic Priorities for the 2006 and 2005 fiscal years.

Membership growth, fiscal stability and strength, and sound allocation of NEA's resources combined to make 2005–06 an outstanding year for the National Education Association.

The chart on the opposite page shows a breakdown of how the $145.00 Active Professional and $80.50 Active ESP NEA dues dollars for 2006–07 are allocated to support and represent members and affiliates in their efforts to achieve the mission of NEA.

Note: A complete copy of the NEA audit report is available upon request.

*On September 4, 2006, the merger of NEA-New York and NYSUT increased membership by 350,797.

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

Consolidated Statements of Financial Position By Fund at August 31, 2006, with comparative totals as of August 31, 2005

	General Operating Fund	Special Purpose Funds	Capital Improvement Fund	Consolidating Entries	2006 Total Funds	2005 Total Funds
Current Assets	$ 90,023,323	$ 39,358,191	$ 2,448,145	$ (8,955,073)	$ 122,874,586	$ 113,212,705
Long-term Assets	17,371,945	15,839,177	43,327,949	(5,233,165)	71,305,906	71,369,990
Total Assets	$ 107,395,268	$ 55,197,368	$ 45,776,094	$ (14,188,238)	$ 194,180,492	$ 184,582,695
Current Liabilities	$ 36,184,286	$ 8,171,064	$ 6,627,336	$ (8,955,073)	$ 42,027,613	$ 39,616,575
Long-term Liabilities	5,219,870	18,388,065	14,707,804	-	38,315,739	38,781,828
Total Liabilities	41,404,156	26,559,129	21,335,140	(8,955,073)	80,343,352	78,398,403
Unrestricted Net Assets						
Undesignated Net Assets	51,196,724	28,638,239	24,440,954	(5,233,165)	99,042,752	87,495,454
Net Assets Designated for Postretirement Benefits	14,794,388	-	-	-	14,794,388	18,688,838
Total Unrestricted Net Assets	65,991,112	28,638,239	24,440,954	(5,233,165)	113,837,140	106,184,292
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	$ 107,395,268	$ 55,197,368	$ 45,776,094	$ (14,188,238)	$ 194,180,492	$ 184,582,695

Your 2006-2007 Dues Dollars

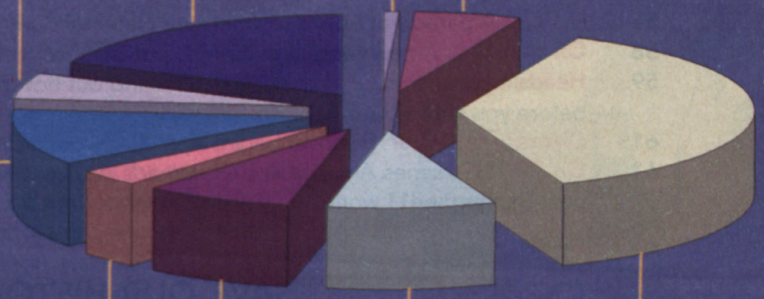
$7.29 ($4.05 ESP)
Governance
Implement an inclusive, engaged governance process that fosters member participation and democratic decision making through such avenues as the Representative Assembly, NEA Board, NEA Executive Committee, and NEA committees and task forces.

$26.35 ($14.63 ESP)
Administrative Support
Provide for the business operations to ensure organizational effectiveness through technology infrastructure, financial services, facilities services, and human resources to serve the needs of affiliates and members.

$1.17 ($0.65 ESP)
Contingency
Provide funding for emergencies at the national, state, or local levels.

$8.61 ($4.78 ESP)
Improve Teaching & Learning
Advocate for qualified teachers and support professionals in every classroom and worksite; provide strategies for school improvement and to close achievement gaps, particularly for low-income and minority students, through teacher preparation, certification, and development; ethnic minority community outreach; high quality schools; and research and documentation on testing and accountability.

$17.19 ($9.54 ESP)
Legal Support
Implement advocacy programs for members including the Unified Legal Services Program, Fidelity Bond, Association Leaders liability insurance, and a $1 million member liability insurance program.



$54.24 ($30.11 ESP)
Support Strong States & Locals To Protect Member Interests
Support the UniServ program, affiliate project and assistance grants, and bargaining training. Research will emphasize increased salaries and benefits through tax equity, economic development, and adequate school funding, and compensation and organizing database technology. Recruit and retain members in all categories and produce communications for members and leaders.

$5.03 ($2.79 ESP)
Leadership Development and Constituency Support
Provide for Regional Leadership Conferences, Minority and Women's Leadership Training, constituent group leadership development, support for councils including NCUEA, ESP, Higher Education, NEA-Retired, and the NEA Student Program.

$11.72 ($6.51 ESP)
Legislative and Ballot Initiative Action
Build bipartisan support for public education that includes lobbying, government relations, a state ballot initiative and legislative crises fund, cyber lobbyists, members' education, and mobilization on political issues.

$13.40 ($7.44 ESP)
Partnerships and Public Relations
Establish new partnerships with diverse supportive organizations and businesses with an emphasis on outreach to ethnic minority communities and family-community organizations. Establish NEA's public image as an advocate for great public schools through TV, radio, print, and cyber news.

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

General Operating Fund — Comparative Statement of Activity and Changes in Net Assets
Year Ended August 31, 2006 and 2005

	2006	2005
Total Revenue	$ 302,710,291	$ 288,855,229
Expenses by Strategic Priorities:		
Student Achievement — Provide students with the skills and knowledge to function successfully in school	5,817,189	5,420,397
Teacher Quality — Ensure a qualified teacher in every classroom	6,352,743	5,158,185
Education Support Professional Quality — Ensuring qualified education support professionals in the classroom and at worksites	4,487,597	4,146,051
Quality School Systems — Build learning environments that support student success	7,184,728	5,953,205
Public, Parental, and Business Support — Promote stronger public, parental, and business support for public education	48,641,378	42,081,440
Membership and Affiliate Support — Mobilize at the local, state, and national levels for the resources basic to quality schools	141,015,733	135,130,154
Administrative Services and Program Support — Provide the administrative and programmatic support vital to the achievement of NEA's goals	87,009,806	88,578,747
Total Unrestricted Expenses	300,509,174	286,468,179
Changes in Net Assets from Operating Activities	2,201,117	2,387,050
Unrestricted Net Assets, Beginning of Year	63,789,995	61,402,945
Unrestricted Net Assets, End of Year	$ 65,991,112	$ 63,789,995

resources

52 **Grants & Awards** The History Channel encourages community preservation projects.
53 **Women's Leadership Training Program** Train for a leadership role in your Association.
53 **Drop Everything and Read** Reading fun continues on April 12!
54 **Take Note** Are your school and classroom safe from particulate matter?
55 **Books by NEA Members** An abecedarium for lovers of the Hawkeye State.
56 **In Print** A parade of books to celebrate National Poetry Month.
58 **On the Web** A new campaign aims to put parents in charge of the TV.
59 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** Find out how much home you can afford before you start house-hunting.
61 **Diversity Calendar** Passover begins April 2—try our recipe for potato "kugelettes."
62 **On TV** PBS's series *America at a Crossroads* looks at the state of the union in a post-September 11 world.

Applications are Due June 1, 2007, for The NEA Foundation Grants

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRANTS provide $5,000 to improve the academic achievement of students by engaging them in critical thinking and problem-solving activities that deepen knowledge of standards-based subject matter. The work should also improve students' habits of inquiry, self-directed learning, and critical reflection.

THE NEA FOUNDATION
www.neafoundation.org

LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS provide opportunities for teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff to engage in high-quality professional development and lead their colleagues in professional growth. The grant amount is $2,000 for individuals and $5,000 for groups engaged in collegial study.

Grants to individuals fund participation in high-quality professional development experiences, such as summer institutes or action research.

Grants to groups fund collegial study, including study groups, action research, lesson study, or mentoring experiences for faculty or staff new to an assignment.

Recipients will be notified by November 15, 2007. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date. All practicing K–12 public school teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities are encouraged to apply.

Visit **www.neafoundation.org** for more information, including guidelines and applications, or call **(202) 822-7840**.

SAVE OUR HISTORY GRANTS

The History Channel will award grants totaling $250,000 to fund dozens of educational community preservation projects across the country as part of its Save Our History Grants Program. Teachers can apply for grants of up to $10,000 in partnership with history museums, historical societies, preservation organizations, libraries, archives, and other 501(c)(3) organizations, to fund projects that teach students about their local history and actively engage them in its preservation.

Visit **www.saveourhistory.com** for guidelines, criteria, descriptions of past grant-winning projects, and to apply. Applications must be submitted online by **June 1, 2007**.

RYAN WHITE HIV PREVENTION AWARDS

Each year the NEA Health Information Network presents the Ryan White HIV Prevention Award to an NEA member or affiliate who has demonstrated a commitment to implementing or supporting innovative HIV prevention education programs. Previous winners have included the Washington Education Association, Cynthia Louden of Pennsylvania, Phillip Armstrong of South Carolina, and last year's honoree, Veronica Cook of Washington. The award will be presented at the 2007 NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

To nominate an individual, school, or affiliate, contact Paul Sathrum for a nomination form at **(202) 822-7787** or send an e-mail to **psathrum@nea.org**. The deadline for applications is **May 25, 2007**.

THE JACK KINNAMAN SCHOLARSHIP

Created in memory of an NEA-Retired Vice President and Advisory Council member, this NEA Student Program award offers support for Student members who need help completing their degree in education by offsetting a portion of their tuition. Visit **www.nea.org/student-program/programs/kinnaman.html** to learn more and to print out an application, or call NEA-Retired at **(202) 822-7149** for more information. The deadline to apply is **April 15, 2007**.

Women's Leadership Training Program

NEA's ability to positively influence policy—to ensure every child's basic right to a great public school and to secure full rights for women—is in direct proportion to our ability to maintain an active and engaged membership.

Thousands of Association women leaders across the country have experienced NEA's Women's Leadership Training. Each year hundreds of women Association members undertake this successful program, especially designed to meet their needs.

Created in the late 1970s in response to a proposal submitted by a Special Committee on Women's Leadership Training, the Women's Leadership Training Program (WLTP) has maintained a high standard for leadership training and a high volume of requests from NEA affiliates for training in their states.

Composed of five packages geared to meet the needs of all members—from those just beginning to participate in the Association all the way to experienced leaders who have been appointed or elected to the highest local, state, and national leadership positions—the training sessions include:

- **PERSONAL ASSESSMENT LEADERSHIP SKILLS**, for members in the early stages of Association participation
- **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DECISION-MAKING SKILLS**, for members beginning to move into leadership positions
- **GROUP PROCESS SKILLS**, designed for diverse groups of male and female Association leaders who want to learn vital communication and decision-making skills
- **ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS SKILLS**, for Association leaders who want to chart a path to higher levels of leadership in the Association
- **CAMPAIGNING TO WIN**, for Association leaders who want to learn how to conduct an effective election campaign to run for higher office, either for themselves or for others.

Women's Leadership Training is delivered regionally three times a year, just prior to Regional Leadership Conferences. State presidents select three members from each state in the region to attend the regional WLTP training. Often, women state presidents who make these selections have been WLTP participants themselves. Numerous women leaders, in high offices of the local, state, and national Associations, credit WLTP with their success.

You could join their ranks! For more information, send an e-mail to gbarker@nea.org or prios@nea.org.

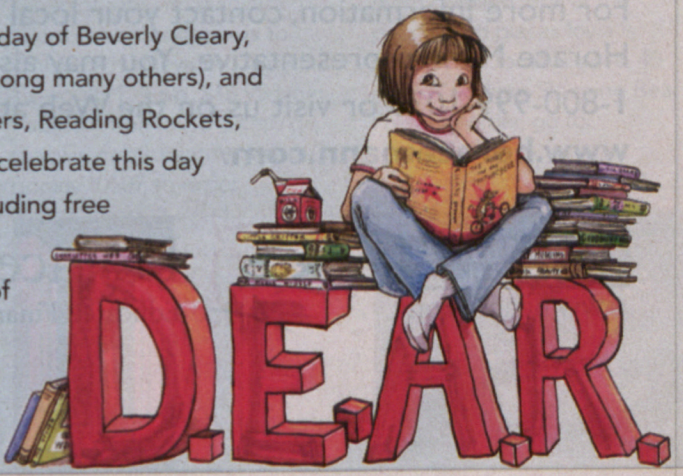
April 12

Drop Everything and Read

with NEA's Read Across America

Ready to drop everything and read? **April 12** is the 91st birthday of Beverly Cleary, beloved author of *Ralph S. Mouse* and the *Ramona* series (among many others), and NEA's Read Across America has joined HarperCollins Publishers, Reading Rockets, Reading is Fundamental, First Book, and the National PTA to celebrate this day as Drop Everything and Read Day. For more information, including free downloadables, go to www.dropeverythingandread.org.

Read Across America partner the Newspaper Association of America has even serialized *Ralph S. Mouse* in newspapers around the country and offers a free teacher's guide. Visit www.naafoundation.org for details. And check out www.nea.org/readacross for new resources and news.



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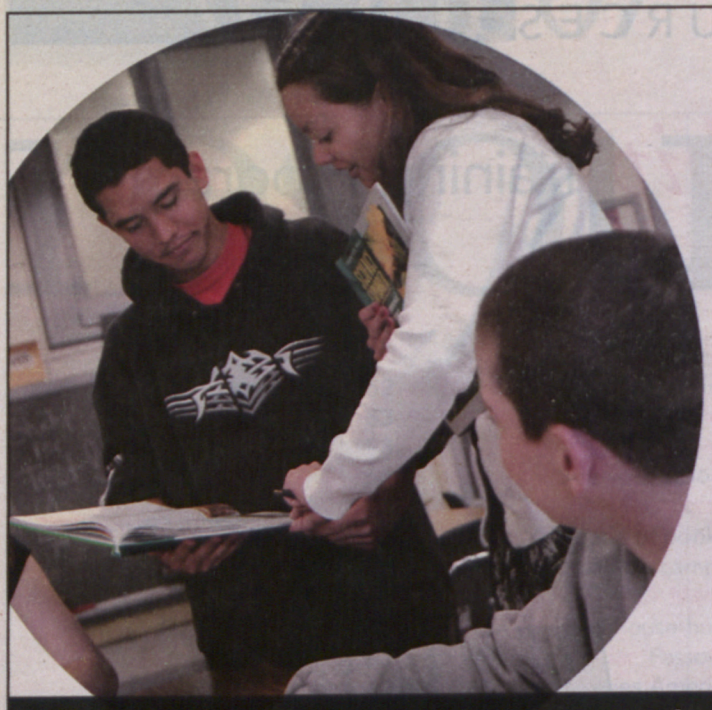

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Take Note

The Air We Breathe

As the research continues to mount, it's no secret that healthy indoor air in our schools is directly linked to staff and student performance. Particulate matter, one of many classes of pollutants found in schools, poses a serious health risk to staff and students.

NEA HIN

Particulate matter is fine liquid or solid particles such as dust, smoke, mist, fumes, and fog. There are many sources of particulate matter, such as incomplete combustion, poorly maintained ventilation systems, and diesel and car exhaust. Some particles are large or dark enough to be seen as soot or smoke, while others are so small they can be detected only with an electron microscope. When fine particulate matter (less than 2.5 microns in size), or PM2.5, is breathed in, it can irritate and damage the lungs and be absorbed into the blood stream.

Particulate matter is associated with many health effects, including lung disease, asthma, and other respiratory problems. Fine particulate matter poses the greatest health risk, because it can pass through the nose and throat and become lodged in the lungs. Short-term exposure may cause shortness of breath, eye and lung irritation, nausea, light-headedness, and possible allergy aggravations. Particles can aggravate existing respiratory conditions, such as asthma and bronchitis, and have been directly associated with increased hospital admissions and emergency room visits for heart and lung disease, decreased lung function, and premature death.

Additional details on particulate matter, including testing information, can be found at the NEA Health Information Network Web site: **www.neahin.org.**

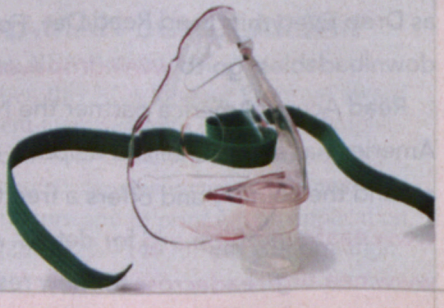


PHOTO: STOCK.XCHNG

Joint Conference on the Concerns of Minorities and Women

This year's annual conference will be held at the Philadelphia Marriott hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on **June 27 and 28, 2007**, prior to the NEA Representative Assembly (RA).

The theme is *One NEA: Many Diverse Voices, Let Freedom Ring!* Highlights include three keynote speakers; mini-plenary sessions on special topics; four 4-hour Learning Labs on critical issues; and multiple workshops.

Participation is limited to 800 preregistered members who are delegates to the 2007 RA and 100 preregistered members who are non-delegates. Delegate status will be verified. As in previous years, there is no on-site registration. If you would like information, call NEA Human and Civil Rights at **(202) 822-7557**. The early registration fee is $110 if post-marked by **May 4, 2007**. Registration after that will be $135.

RA delegates attending the Joint Conference will receive a two-night stay (double occupancy) at the Philadelphia Marriott for the nights of June 26 and 27. Non-delegates must pay for their own room, and payment must be received with the registration form. *Note:* No one will be able to call the hotel directly to make reservations—*all* reservations must be made through NEA Human and Civil Rights.

41st Annual Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner

The 2007 Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner will be held **July 1, 2007,** in the Grand Ballroom of the Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) Marriott. The annual gala honors the legacy of the National Education Association/American Teachers Association merger; celebrates our Association's multiethnic roots; and salutes the human and civil rights heroes of our day.

The theme, *NEA—150 Years: Taking a Stand and Making a Difference!* pays tribute to NEA's 150th Anniversary.

Tickets may only be purchased through NEA Human and Civil Rights on a first-come, first-served basis until **May 18, 2007**, or until sold out. No tickets will be available for sale on-site. The cost is $65 per ticket or $650 per table of 10. Tickets will not be mailed. They will be distributed at:

- THE JOINT CONFERENCE on Concerns of Minorities and Women on **June 27-28** for individuals and states
- THE MEETING OF CONVENTION coordinators for states
- THE AWARDS DINNER TICKET BOOTH at the Philadelphia Convention Center on **June 30** and until **noon on July 1**
- THE "WILL CALL" DESK at the Philadelphia Marriott Grand Ballroom.

For more, call NEA Human and Civil Rights at **(202) 822-7709**.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

SUNRISE SUNSET

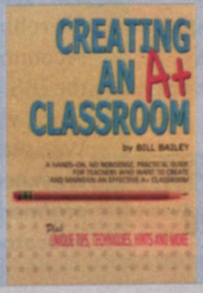
By Kathleen Marie Marsh and Heather Sprangers

Written by an English teacher and her former student, this novel explores the unlikely friendship that develops between Ellie, a soon-to-be-retired educator, and Janelle, a young woman who has finally become pregnant after years of infertility, as each is faced with a personal struggle. While Ellie handles her mother's Alzheimer's, Janelle cannot seem to make her life anything but chaotic. 306 pp. $12.50 from Otter Run Books. Go to www.otterrunbooks.com.

CREATING AN A+ CLASSROOM

By Bill Bailey

An experienced educator, author, and speaker shares advice, tips, techniques, and lessons learned from his 30-plus years of teaching in this guide to running an organized and effective classroom. Written primarily to empower new teachers, each tip is backed up by clear, concise prose and includes quotes, practical ideas, and little touches of humor. 127 pp. $14.95 from Character Press. To order, go to www.amazon.com.



WE'RE GOING TO HOLLYWOOD!

By Robert Lawrence Gilstrap

A retired professor draws on family history to write the fictional story of 13-year-old J.W. Gilclay, who must give up his dream of becoming a farmer when his parents move to Hollywood to join the growing movie industry. While there, J.W. helps make ends meet, and through a series of jobs, rediscovers his talent for art and grows to embrace his new life. Ages 12–adult. 111 pp. $16.95 from PublishAmerica. To order, go to www.publishamerica.com/books/10607 to order.

H IS FOR HAWKEYE: AN IOWA ALPHABET

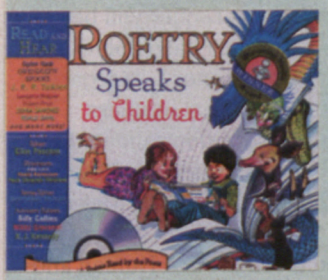
By Patricia Pierce

"O" is for the Oak,
Our official state tree...

Fun rhymes and heartwarming illustrations give young readers a taste of Iowa's vibrant history. Each page in this hardback book, written by an Iowa native, features alphabet-themed verse, alongside one or two paragraphs that give a more detailed look at the people and places Iowa is best known for. Ages 4–8. 40 pp. $17.95 from Sleeping Bear Press. To order, go to www.gale.com.

In Print

A COLLECTION OF CLASSIC VERSE



Ninety-five children's poems from 73 acclaimed poets fill ***Poetry Speaks to Children***, edited by Elise Paschen. To bring the experience alive, the book comes with a CD-ROM on which 52 of the poems are read aloud, many by their authors, including Robert Frost, Ogden Nash, Joy Harjo, and MaryAnn Hoberman. Ages 4–8. 112 pp. $19.95 from Sourcebooks Inc. Go to www.amazon.com.

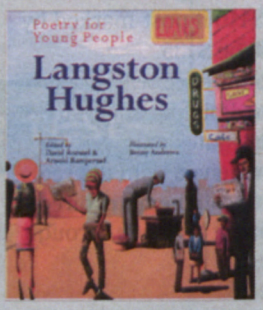
NATIVE VERSE

Written for adults, the poems in Phillip Carroll Morgan's ***The Fork-In-The-Road Indian Poetry Store*** can provide older students an introduction to contemporary American Indian poetry. Inspired by his Choctaw/Chickasaw heritage, Morgan's powerful, beautiful, and nature-filled verse gives readers a unique glimpse into the life of a modern American Indian. High school and up. 140 pp. $16.95 from Salt Publishing. To order, go to www.saltpublishing.com.

THREE DECADES OF POETRY

Getting students to appreciate poetry can be challenging, but ***Poetic Possibilities: Using Poetry to Enhance Literacy Learning*** has answers. Edited by Susan and Michelle Israel, this anthology contains literacy-focused poems culled from 30 years of *The Reading Teacher* magazine. Each poem is accompanied by prompts to get educators and students thinking about the poem, along with ideas and activities to integrate poetry into lessons and encourage students to write their own poetry. 130 pp. $19.95 from the International Reading Association. To order, go to www.reading.org.

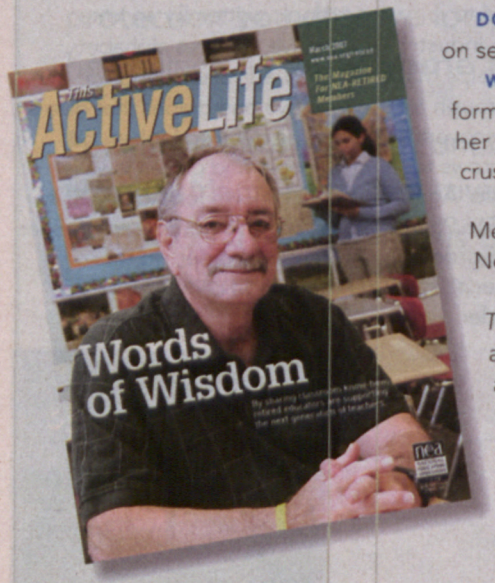
WORDS LIKE FREEDOM



Edited By David Roessel and Arnold Rampersad, ***Poetry for Young People: Langston Hughes*** brings the verse of one of the foremost icons of the Harlem Renaissance to young readers. Twenty-six of Hughes' most notable poems are accompanied by brief background information and vibrant paintings from renowned American artist Benny Andrews. Ages 9–12. 48 pp. $14.95 from Sterling Publishing. Go to www.amazon.com.

Keeping Up With *This Active Life*

We all have reason to be concerned about the statistics on new teacher retention: Nearly 50 percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years, and 20 percent leave after just one year. NEA-Retired is leading the charge to support fledgling teachers with its Intergenerational Mentoring Program. In the **March** issue of *This Active Life*, NEA's magazine for Retired members, you'll meet retiree-new teacher teams from Oregon, Illinois, and Arizona and discover how the program developed over the past four years. Also, you can find out more about the new NEA-Retired Intergenerational Mentoring Toolkit (available through state affiliates).



Also in this issue:

DOUBLES TENNIS kicks off our series on senior-friendly sports.

WE CAUGHT UP with Cissy Lacks, the former teacher from Missouri who lost her job and became a first amendment crusader.

PLUS, READER FAVORITES: People, Member Profiles, and NEA-Retired News updates.

Selections from each issue of *This Active Life* are available online at www.nea.org/retired/index.html and copies are available from NEA Interactive Media: 1201 16th St. N.W., Suite 710, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 822-7207.

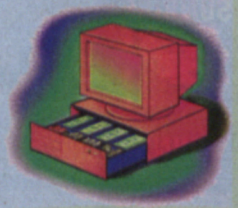
NEA-Retired

Educator Tax Deduction Is Back, But Right Tax Form Isn't

Congress has reauthorized a $250 tax deduction for educators, but not in time to be printed in tax forms.

Thanks in large part to NEA's lobbying efforts, with grassroots support by members all over the country, the Educator Expense Deduction was reinstated by Congress. However, the legislation made it into law in late December, long after the Internal Revenue Service printed this year's official tax forms.

To claim the $250 deduction for out-of-pocket classroom expenses, tax filers must follow the special instructions issued by the IRS, or file returns electronically—an option recommended by the IRS. For more, visit NEA's Web site at **www.nea.org/member/educatortax.html**.



COMPUTER ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

EDUCATION MARKET

Save on LizClaiborne.com!

Enjoy 10% savings with LizClaiborne.com, as our exclusive offer to you. Enter code NEALIZ4 at checkout.

Personalize your style in career separates or chic weekend looks. Liz is...meeting wardrobe needs with a fashion-forward sensibility, no matter where you are or what you're doing.

Valid until 5/31/07. See website for restrictions.

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Teachers! — Earn college credit while studying abroad! These credits can help you advance on the salary schedule or fulfill continuing education requirements.

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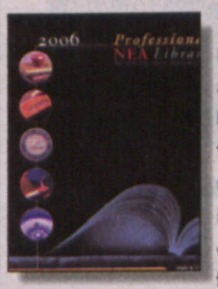
Learn more at **www.seattlecentral.edu/coop** or call 206-587-5422.

www.teachingtolerance.org/neaposters

NEA PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY



***THE* Bookstore for Educators**

It takes inspiration to keep students motivated and excited to learn. The **NEA Professional Library** has the innovative resources you need to revitalize your classroom. Each title is research-based and designed for application in real classrooms. Whether you're a veteran educator or brand new to the classroom, you'll find materials designed to help you meet the challenges you face every day. To order, call **800-229-4200** or visit us at **www.nea.org/books**.

¡HABLAMOS ESPANOL!

NEA Member Benefits is striving to better serve our diverse NEA membership. Programas y Servicios Beneficios Para Miembros De La NEA is a new brochure available entirely in Spanish that lists all NEA Member Benefits programs and services.

To obtain a copy or to inquire in Spanish about NEA Member Benefits programs call toll-free **1-800-637-4636** and ask for a Spanish-speaking Member Service Representative.

nea Member Benefits
www.neamb.com

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Tools For Teachers

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- IEP Tools
- Assessment Tools
- Grade Book Tools
- Classroom Tools
- Performance Tools

Sign up today!

www.neateachertoolkit.com

On the Web

WHO'S THE BOSS?

The National Association of Broadcasters and the Ad Council have announced an 18-month TV and radio campaign to inform parents about the TV ratings system, content labels, and V-Chip guidelines. Their message: Television provides a wealth of fascinating and educational information. Help children take advantage of television with programs that teach, inspire, and instill values their parents find important. Media management—not elimination—means balancing television with other activities, and helping children learn how to make good TV decisions. The campaign's user-friendly Web site provides instructions for blocking out certain programs, as well as instructions on how to restore programs for adult viewing.

Visit **www.TheTVBoss.org** for details.

A BOUNTY OF RESOURCES

The MarcoPolo Web site and the Verizon Literacy Network have combined to form Thinkfinity—a Web site of educational content created by renowned organizations who are experts in their fields, such as the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Content areas include arts integration, economics, geography, the humanities, mathematics, reading, language arts, and science. Lesson plans, reviewed Web sites, student materials, interactive activities, assessments, and training materials for K–12 educators and students can be found here at no cost, though registration is required.

Go to **www.thinkfinity.org**.

MUSEUMS AS CLASSROOMS

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) supports many exhibits that travel across the country and, in some cases, around the world. Teachers may find these exhibits useful as field trip destinations, or, in instances where host museums have online exhibits, as Internet enrichment opportunities.

During 2007, 26 traveling exhibits and 115 long-term exhibits will appear in 42 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Germany, and Switzerland.

Some may be near you. For example, "A Slave Ship Speaks: The Wreck of the Henrietta Marie," a traveling exhibit featuring artifacts recovered from an English merchant slave ship that sank in 1701 in the Florida Keys, runs through May 19, 2007, at the University of Richmond Museums (**http://museums.richmond.edu/hmaexhibitions/henrietta_marie.html**), Richmond, Virginia. And there are many more.

To find out about exhibits near you, visit **www.neh.gov/projects/et-index.html**. Click on the map to see what activities are scheduled in your state. You can also view an alphabetical list of exhibits and their itineraries. *Note:* No links are provided to Web sites of host museums or institutions—you will need to search the Internet to find the organizations online.

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Program names vary by location. Not all programs are available at every location.

Argosy University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association (NCA) (30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602, 1.800.621.7440, www.ncahlc.org).

Argosy University/Washington DC is certified to operate by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (James Monroe Building, 101 North 14th Street, Richmond, VA 23219, 1.804.225.2600).

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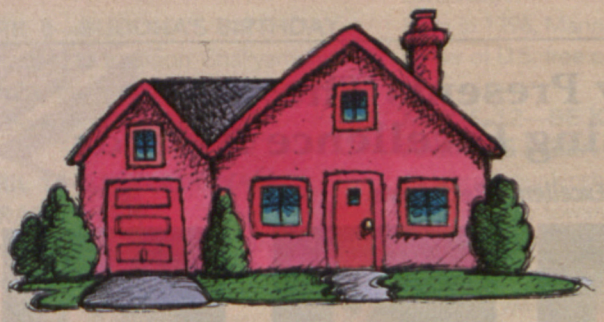
Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NEW WAYS TO SAVE

CLICK ON 'MEMBER DISCOUNTS' at **www.neamb.com**, the easy-to-navigate NEA Member Benefits Web Site. You'll quickly learn how to save money on:

- **CLASSROOM** and home office supplies
- **BOOKS**, music, movies, and gifts
- **CELL PHONES** and service plans
- **VACATIONS** and tours
- **MAGAZINE** subscriptions
- **AUTO** rentals
- **SELF HELP** legal publications and software.

WWW.NEAMB.COM is also a convenient place to register (or change) your beneficiaries for the NEA DUES-TAB® Insurance Program, the automatic term life insurance coverage for Association members. While you're online, register for the monthly Web Site Giveaway (no purchase necessary to enter). Valuable items are awarded each month, such as car rental certificates, gift cards, and vacation getaways.



PAVE A SMOOTH PATH TO YOUR NEW FRONT DOOR

IF YOU'RE IN THE MARKET to purchase a home this spring or summer, finding out up front how much "home" you can afford can make the process a whole lot easier.

Your borrowing power (the amount a mortgage lender is willing to lend you) is determined by several factors, including your monthly pre-tax income and outstanding debt.

Get started by talking directly to a mortgage lender. And whether you're a first-time buyer or a seasoned pro, NEA members can get a free pre-qualification analysis by calling the NEA Home Financing Program® at **1 (800) NEA-4-YOU** (1-800-632-4968). You can also stop by any local Wells Fargo Home Mortgage branch—be sure to ask about the special NEA member bonus!

LAST YEAR, NEA MEMBERS MADE NEARLY ONE MILLION VISITS TO NEAMB.COM, THE NEA MEMBER BENEFITS WEB SITE!

SUPPORT ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION
Join The NEA Fund today!

"As a Republican teacher, I *am* the NEA and I give to The NEA Fund. We can affect change on both sides of the aisle and make a positive difference for a quality public education for every child."

CALLIE MARKSBARY
2nd Grade Teacher
Vinton Elementary School
Lafayette, IN

Go to **www.neafund.org** *and join The NEA Fund today to help elect pro-public education candidates.*

THE NEA FUND
For Children & Public Education
The Political Action Committee of the National Education Association

Teaching Research Spotlight

If you're interested in what the research says about your profession, visit NEA's online venue highlighting professional research on best practices in educational issues.

This month's focus is on "Teaching and Learning," including the many factors that contribute to a quality teaching and learning environment, with an emphasis on:

- the use of diversity in the classroom
- the need for teachers to be viewed as facilitators and participants in the teaching and learning process, rather than as the "sage on the stage."

Learn more at
www.nea.org/ref?3461

Teaching & Learning

ILLUSTRATION AND PHOTO, LOWER RIGHT: GETTY IMAGES

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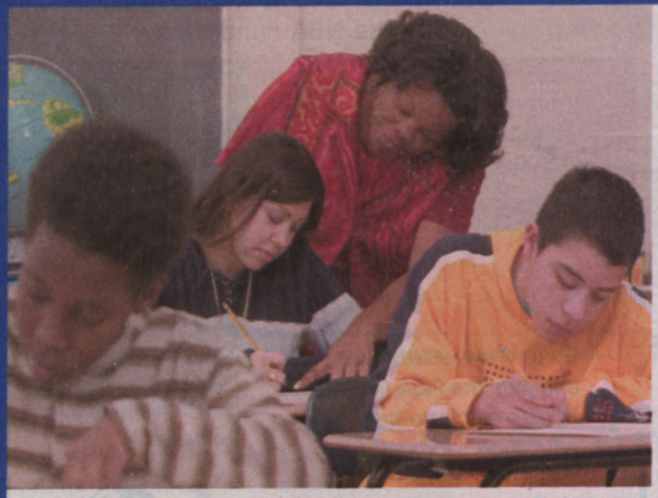
2005-2006 Participating Schools

Clark Atlanta University, GA
Bowie State University, MD
Jackson State University, MS
Harris-Stowe State University, MO
Tennessee State University, TN
Johnson C. Smith University, NC
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, PA

NEA & The Tom Joyner Foundation



Tom Joyner Foundation & The National Education Association:

Moving Teachers Toward Full Licensure!

The Foundation and the National Education Association believe that pre-K through 12 curriculum should be taught by licensed teachers. We recognize that in certain urban, suburban, and rural communities not every teacher is licensed. In an effort to help teachers become fully licensed, the Foundation and NEA agreed to join forces to assist teachers who desire to gain full licensure. The unprecedented program is designed to increase the number of fully-certified minority teachers around the country to strengthen America's teaching force.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the Foundation provided financial assistance and NEA provided technical assistance and expertise to nearly 300 teachers in seven states supporting their participation in coursework and workshops. The program also paid for materials and individual tutoring to help teachers prepare for state licensure examinations.

Today, the partnership is looking to increase the number of participating Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and expand the program to help more teachers obtain full licensure.

Stay tuned for updated information via the *NEA Today* and the NEA website www.nea.org.

nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION nea.org
Great Public Schools for Every Child

www.nea.org/joyner

The NEA Foundation Proudly Presents The 2007 Recipients Of The Teaching Excellence Awards

***The NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence* Recipient**
James A. Brooks
North Carolina Assn. of Educators
West Wilkes High School
Millers Creek, NC

***The Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence* Recipients**

Jay Stanforth
Arizona Education Assn.
Hendricks Elementary
Tucson, AZ

Trent Daniel
Florida Education Assn.
Hagerty High School
Oviedo, FL

Kimberly Oliver
Maryland State Teachers Assn.
Broad Acres Elementary
Silver Spring, MD

Pamela Sime
Pennsylvania State Education Assn.
Unami Middle School
Chalfont, PA

On February 8th at the NEA Foundation's Annual Gala, we honored educators from across the nation who exhibit outstanding teaching, creativity, community engagement, advocacy, attention to diversity, and professional development.

- The NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence is a $25,000 award given each year to one teacher from across the country.
- The Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence are given to the finalist for the NEA Member Benefits award. Each receives $10,000.
- The I CAN Learn® Award for Teaching Excellence is given to all state affiliate award nominees for the NEA Member Benefits award.

THE NEA FOUNDATION

Special thanks to the major sponsors of the NEA Foundation's 12th Annual Salute to Excellence in Education Gala.

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Certified Pre-Loved Volkswagens
nea Member Benefits neamb.com
Horace Mann Educators Financial Solutions
I CAN Learn® EDUCATION SYSTEMS
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DIVERSITY CALENDAR

APRIL

APRIL 1–30—NATIONAL POETRY MONTH
Created by the Academy of American Poets in 1996, this festival celebrates poetry and its vital place in American culture. Visit www.poets.org.

APRIL 2—PASSOVER BEGINS
This Jewish festival, commemorating the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt, begins at sunset and continues until nightfall on April 10. Traditionally, families gather for a special dinner called *Seder.*

APRIL 8—EASTER SUNDAY
Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ on this day, observed the first Sunday following the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox.

APRIL 8—BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY
According to tradition, Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was born this day in 1029 BC.

APRIL 15–21—NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK
Celebrate and use your library! Visit www.ala.org/ala/pio/natlibraryweek/nlw.htm.

MAY

MAY 1–31—BETTER HEARING AND SPEECH MONTH
The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association sponsors this month to raise public awareness about how to identify, prevent, and treat speech, language, and hearing disorders. Go to www.asha.org/bhsm.

MAN 1–31—NATIONAL PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SPORTS MONTH
Sponsored by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, this month is a good time to start participating in regular physical activity and learn about the benefits of exercise. Visit www.fitness.gov.

MAY 4–HORACE MANN'S BIRTHDAY
Born in 1796, Mann is considered the father of U.S. free public schools.

MAY 6–12—BE KIND TO ANIMALS WEEK
Celebrate our kinship with and responsibility toward other creatures. Visit the American Humane Association—event sponsor since 1915—at www.americanhumane.org.

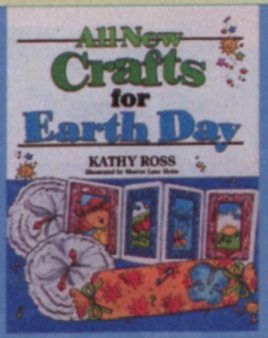
Diversity Recipe

POTATO 'KUGELETTES'

Potato kugel (KOO-gul)—a thick, savory pudding or casserole—is traditional at Passover. This charming variation makes individual portions that are easy for children to eat. Yield: 24 "kugelettes," enough for everyone to have a taste.

Ingredients
2–3 large Idaho potatoes (or enough to make 2 cups, grated)
1/2 large onion (or enough to make 1/2 cup, grated)
4 eggs, beaten
1-1/2 tsp kosher salt
freshly ground pepper to taste
2 Tbsp chicken fat, butter, or margarine, melted, plus extra for greasing muffin pans
1/2 Tbsp matzah (matzo) meal, plus extra for dusting pans

Preheat oven to 375°. Peel potatoes and submerge in cold water. Grate potatoes and onions in the small holes of a hand grater. Wrap potato/onion mixture in a clean cloth and squeeze out excess liquid (stop when liquid slows to a drip). Combine with other ingredients. Grease 24 muffin cups and dust with matzah meal. Spoon 2 Tbsp mixture into each cup and bake 25 minutes, until golden.



EASY ACTIVITIES FOR EARTH DAY
You'll find plenty of illustrated activities in Kathy Ross's *All New Crafts for Earth Day.* Using simple materials like egg cartons, blue jeans, and soda bottles, children can learn about recycling while making earth-friendly crafts. Ages 4–8. 47 pp. $7.95 from Millbrook Press. Go to www.amazon.com.

April 22—Earth Day

This annual event was founded in 1970 by Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-WI) to focus public sentiment on the importance of environmental issues. Various earth-centered events also occur during the month. Here's a short list of resources to use as you plan activities.

April 15-22—National Environmental Education Week. NEA is a partner in this yearly effort that seeks to enhance the impact of Earth Day and recognizes educators who are committed to implementing environmental education in their classrooms. Visit **www.eeweek.org**.

The EnviroLink Network is an online clearinghouse for environmental information, including a comprehensive list of Earth Day events. Go to **http://earthday.envirolink.org**.

Recycle, Raise Money. Terracycle Inc. runs a program called The Bottle Brigade that raises funds for schools and recycles 20-oz. soda bottles. For every bottle collected, Terracycle refunds 5¢. They even supply prepaid mailing materials. Visit **www.terracycle.net** for more information.

April 27—Arbor Day. It all started with one man who missed his trees—J. Sterling Morton, a pioneer who arrived in the Nebraska Territory in 1854. In 1885, Arbor Day was named a legal holiday in Nebraska, and other states followed. For more, visit **www.arborday.org**.

PHOTO: ABOUT.COM

On TV

PLANET EARTH: POLE TO POLE

Discovery Channel, April 1, 8, 15, & 22, 8 p.m. ET/PT.
Remarkable and strange, this show looks at the most beautiful and remote places on Earth and the animals inhabiting them. The series explores deserts and ice worlds, seas and great plains, and culminates with two hours on forests and caves. Fans of *Blue Planet* will also enjoy this program. More information can be found at www.discovery.com.

BARBARIANS

History Channel, April 2–5, 6 a.m. ET/PT.
This four-part series explores tribes that fought the bastions of civilization. Part 1 looks at the Vikings—warriors, settlers, traders, and explorers. Part 2 examines the relationship between the Goths and the Roman Empire. Part 3 explores Genghis Khan and the Mongolian Empire. Part 4 looks at Attila and the Huns, who conquered lands from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Tape and use in class for two years with materials at www.history.com/classroom.

ICE AGE: EXTREME CLIMATE

Discovery Channel, April 11, 5 a.m. ET/PT.
Discover how Earth and its life-forms respond to and affect climate change, from the Ice Age to El Niño to the greenhouse effect, by following the formation and movement of ice and cyclical challenges to survival. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year.

AMERICA AT A CROSSROADS

PBS, April 15–20, 9 p.m. ET/PT. Check local listings.
Billed as a major television event, this series presents six prime time documentaries about where we are in a post-September 11 world, and how we got here. Journalist Robert MacNeil narrates throughout as each segment examines the conflict between Islamic fundamentalism and American society. After five years in Iraq, MacNeil says, the consequences for our future are just beginning to come into focus. More information is available at the interactive companion Web site, www.pbs.org/crossroads.

ELEMENTS OF PHYSICS: MODERN PHYSICS AND COSMOLOGY

Discovery, April 18, 5 a.m. ET/PT.
This episode explores concepts of modern physics and the universe, such as the subatomic world and Einstein's theories of relativity. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year.

U.S.S. CONSTELLATION: BATTLING FOR FREEDOM

History Channel, April 23–24, 6 a.m. ET/PT.
This two-part program chronicles the U.S. Navy's 1859 pursuit of an illegal carrier attempting to transport more than 700 slaves to the United States. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years. Teaching materials are available at www.history.com/classroom.

OnTV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and Cable in the Classroom Magazine *at www.ciconline.org.*

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Who Are You Today?

Adventures in substitute teaching.

BY DOUG PROVENCIO

Being a substitute teacher often means having to wrestle with identity at the start of each day. People will ask who I am today, and I have to figure out who they are. Getting a name right starts the day better.

Young kids like roll call. The community gathers on the rug and they can tell the day will work out, even without their regular teacher. In a Spanish-speaking group, they'll say "presente" until one says "presidente," and I'll know who has a sense of humor.

With older students, even if I have a seating chart, I ask everybody for their names and write them down on my own impromptu class map. With the tougher teenagers, I have to preface this by saying they're not in trouble, I just want to learn their names.

Names are linked to dignity, and everybody wants to have a say in what they will be called. Having students say their names sets a tone of mutual respect. Likewise, when a student wants to call me "Mr. P," maybe they aren't thinking what I would have thought as a 10-year-old: "Mr. Pee." But I don't want it to sink to that level, so I steer them away with "call me Mr. Pro, you don't want to get confused with my cousin." They always fall for this and ask who my cousin is. I say, "Master P," and then take advantage of their confusion to start in on the next item of work.

"IF MARTIN LUTHER KING is dead and it's his birthday, who gets to eat his birthday cake?"

Substitutes develop all kinds of tricks to guide their charges.

Modern gadgets make things especially challenging. Students carry many things with them today; sometimes we have to relieve them of those items. Once I was talking with a first-grade class when a cell phone suddenly rang. A student pulled it out, said into it, "I can't talk, I'm busy right now," and put it back. Six years old, he had already perfected the proper business-like manner.

Teenagers have fancier electronic toys and many other items as well, like the live garter snake a ninth-grader pulled out of his pocket and waved around.

We have interesting objects, too. One of my students refused to do her chemistry assignment computing moles. Then another student got a cut and I gave her one of my X-Men bandages. The first one said she wanted one, too, even without a cut. We cut a deal: She got the bandage, I got a perfectly completed paper. (All the while, I was trying to recall my knowledge of moles from a previous decade, and then trying to be humble when I finally remembered).

With all that goes on in classroom management, it's sometimes hard to focus on why we're there: We're teachers, not babysitters. The advice to substitute teachers to carry around worksheets falls apart when faced with the huge scope of today's curriculum. It's better to walk in like a detective, ready to analyze every detail one can find in the room to figure out what needs to be done in the context of what the class is already working on. Then the job is to explain, motivate, and lead all students along on the journey.

That journey can lead anywhere. Once, just before Martin Luther King Jr. Day, I had a kindergarten class. After talking about how sad it was that he was killed, one boy said a word very quietly. I asked him to repeat it and he said "cake." I asked what he meant and he said, "Well, if Martin Luther King is dead and it's his birthday, who gets to eat his birthday cake?" Someone else suggested "everybody" and I said that's true in a way because he made the world a better place for everybody. All the kids nodded because that made perfect sense to them. It takes a lot of maneuvering on our part to get a class ready for those moments of sudden wisdom.

J.K. Rowling worked as a substitute teacher. So did Bel Kaufman, who wrote *Up the Down Staircase*, a composite account of the schools where she subbed. In her novel, the narrator is frustrated by one student who never calls her by name, but just says, "Hey, Teach." At the end, she has an epiphany, realizing that "Teach" was a mark of respect.

So, if you still don't know what to call us traveling adventurers, you could do a lot worse than "Hey, Teach."

Doug Provencio substitutes in Oakland, California, and wrote *Standing in Your Shoes* to help regular and substitute teachers work together. He has also helped bargain for and design professional development for substitutes: Visit www.nea.org/ref?3446 for more.

PHOTO: SEAN CONNELLEY

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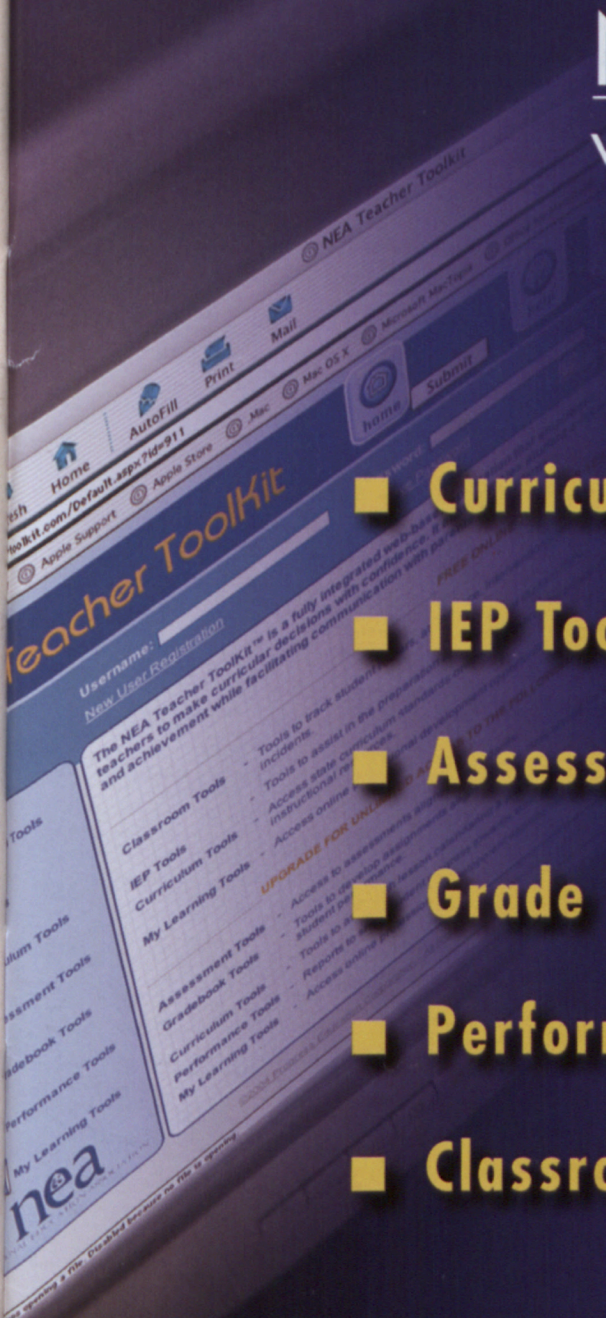

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